

BJ

1671

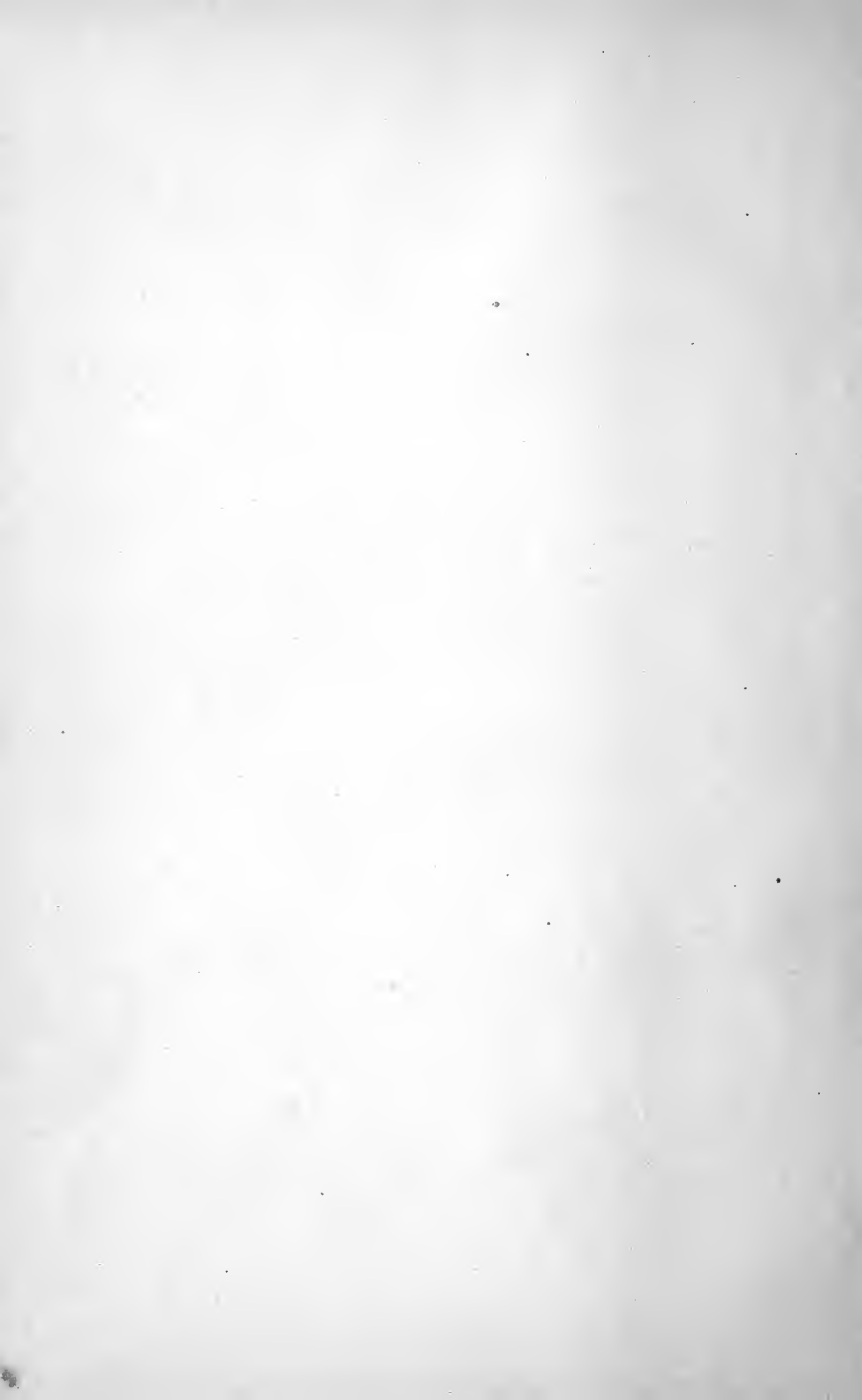
.G8



Class BJ1671

Book .G2





THE
YOUNG MAN
SETTING OUT IN LIFE.

- I. LIFE : HOW WILL YOU USE IT?
- II. SKEPTICAL DOUBTS : HOW YOU MAY SOLVE THEM.
- III. POWER OF CHARACTER : HOW YOU MAY ASSERT IT.
- IV. GRANTEUR OF DESTINY : HOW YOU MAY REACH IT.

BY WILLIAM GUEST, F. G. S.

PUBLISHED BY THE
AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,
150 NASSAU-STREET, NEW YORK.

£ 1868 3

BJ1671
.G8

ROOMS OF YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,

NO. 161 FIFTH-AVENUE, }
New York, Jan. 7, 1868. }

TO THE SECRETARIES OF THE AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY :

The Executive Committee of the Young Men's Christian Associations of the United States and the British Provinces, having learned that your Society is proposing to reprint Mr. Guest's book, entitled, "The Young Man Setting Out in Life," desire to say, after a careful examination, that they take great pleasure in commending it to the "Christian Associations" of this continent, and to all young men, as one calculated to be very largely useful, and as meriting a wide circulation.

CEPHAS BRAINERD,

CHAIRMAN.

In Exchange
Army And Navy Club
Of Washington D.C.
Jan. 14, 1930

TO
GEORGE WILLIAMS, ESQ.

TREASURER OF THE LONDON ASSOCIATION,

AND

TO THE VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIA-
TIONS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND
AMERICA:

To you I beg to offer the four following addresses—they may be helpful in your service for young men. Thousands there are who watch your Associations with deep and grateful interest. By some persons, it may be, your aims are misunderstood. I have never learned that you condemned other literary and recreative associations; but you have felt that there was room for one dis-

tinctively Christian. You do not frown on joy and pastime; you do not disparage literary education; but you have not been ashamed to avow that your object is to save young men from irreligion, and to promote among yourselves spiritual and Christian culture. To not a few it therefore appears that not only are your associations among the very noblest, but that they preëminently meet the demand of these times. Reading-rooms and opportunities for social enjoyment are doubtless most desirable, but it is true piety that is the safety and mainspring of prosperity to a community.

To the best and most distinguished men of this era it seems that the stability and progress of the great Christian nations depend upon the maintenance of Christianity in its integrity, and as honestly derived from the supernatural teaching of the New Testament Scriptures. We have, however, come

upon an age of the gravest perils. What has been the spring-head and occasioner of these perils? This: Men have become estranged from intercourse with God, and from the thoughts of the holy and spiritual world. No longer living in believing relation to the Father of their spirits, they have lost the light whereby all things become luminous and harmonized. Three errors now lay straight in their path; and to one or other of these, according to temperament, they have been drawn: materialistic worldliness, that inclines man's whole attentions to the interests, pleasures, and gains of the world of sense; scientific atheism, whereby a small minority, happily, of scientific expounders attempt to bow God out of his universe, and to resolve all creation into spontaneous life and self-development; intellectual rationalism, that makes man his own savior, denies sin and atonement, moral weakness and Di-

vine grace. It would appear as if Satan's last and deadliest assault upon the hopes and progress of the race was to be the denial of the self-existent God. Assuredly, let the control of this belief go, and this vital consciousness be lost, and the wide floodgates of iniquity and of lawlessness will be opened, and nothing can save millions from relapsing into barbarism. Even Mr. Buckle has taught that a materialistic philosophy led the way to the horrors of the French Revolution. At such a time, then, as this, Christian associations, with objects so clearly defined, and where arrangements are primary to secure intercourse with Christ and with a spiritual world, meet the deepest want of the age. Moreover, who so well as young men can work among the young? You know the snare that is spread for their feet; "the cup that is poisoned and reached out for their hand; the eye that glares death which is

fixed upon them in secret." Every good man must, therefore, wish you encouragement in your labor to save and ennoble your companions. You are blessing your country and your times. Your work will be fruitful and abide. Thousands who now do not understand you will afterwards pour benedictions over your memories. You, in an age of speculative and moral dangers, will be held to have been benefactors. The days are surely coming when above all other days men will be needed who, by their Christian enlightenment and sanctity, can impart steadiness and elevation to their times. Then the men to whom the age will turn will be men with hearts and understandings which have been animated by Christian faith. To secure such a generation is your high aim. May God prosper your purpose and your devotion.

To you, then, I dedicate my little book,

which attempts to portray some of the aspects of modern life, and some of the alarming and imperilling temptations with which modern habits and modes of opinion are surrounding young men.

The first lecture was printed in a separate form ; but as the whole edition has been disposed of, it has been thought better to let it now appear with the others.

W. G.

LONDON : CANONBURY PARK.

L I F E :

HOW WILL YOU USE IT?



LIFE :

HOW WILL YOU USE IT ?

THE following words are addressed to young men by one who, not very long ago, was one of them. If they are serious and earnest, they are none the less sympathetic and brotherly.

On the mind of some thoughtful men there is the fear that England has seen her best days, that her sun is going down, and that a decline like that of other great nations has begun. This is probably the language of mere pessimists. Albeit, even hopeful men have reason enough to be anxious. There is a frost of skepticism touching the young mind of England. There is a dread of enthusiasm which bodes ill. Young men stand in our great cities amid juggling expedients, glittering pretences, specious deceits, unscrupulous

pulous graspings after wealth or position ; the tides of temptation flow fast around them ; a high civilization has made wickedness very facile and seductive ; veteran experts in vice are found everywhere, and the very streets are allowed to be fevered walks of lustful solicitations.

If England is to be saved and is to have a great future, it will be through her young men. They are the hope of society. A man, therefore, who is indifferent to their moral dangers and welfare is no friend to his country. I will make, then, no apology while I speak to them earnestly of their life, and what it may be and can be. No doubt there are scores of empty and frivolous young men who can never be won to thoughtfulness. May God help them ; for the look-out that is before them is awful. But there are many of a different stamp, and may their Father and mine help me to articulate his yearning thoughts about them.

My brother, I am not about to speak to you of what belongs to others, nor mainly of the duties you owe to others ; but of what

you imperatively owe to yourself, and what emphatically belongs to you. You have an existence in which the grandest and the most terrific possibilities are wrapped up. Life has been given to you. What significance is in the word! Life, with its unknown treasures and vast capabilities; life, with all its resources and opportunities; life, with all its rich enjoyments and pleasurable unfoldings; life, endowed with consciousness and divine faculties; life, which beginning with the sweetness of infancy, and passing through the open-heartedness of school days, can ripen into a beauty and strength and force of goodness which, through the long ages of immortality, will find accessions of ever-augmenting felicity, power, and blissfulness. My brother, when I discourse to you of the value of this transcendent gift of life, exaggeration is hardly possible. No language of men or angels can worthily set forth the full meaning of this gift. You, among creatures, are obviously destined to rank with the noblest or the basest of beings; the elevation with which you come into the universe is the measure of

the grandeur to which you may rise, or the degradation to which you may fall.

The question therefore comes, What do you intend to do with this your life? You have come to an age when this question confronts you. You ignore your rationality by evading it. The two paths of honor and dishonor are now before you: which do you intend to take? I put the inquiry in this form—What will you do with your life?—because millions of men have been ruined, not so much through wrong intention as through want of thought. They have drifted into an evil course through a passive unthinkingness. It is not that they have resolved to do bad things, but they have not resolved to do good ones. Instead of being masters of themselves, sad to say, they have not even belonged to themselves. On their forehead might have been once written, “We are open to become the possession of whatsoever shall make capture of us.” Instead of controlling, they have been borne along by outward things, like a little boat in a dangerous stream, not carefully rowed and guided, but empty, and

inviting any unskilled or wicked hand to become its master.

There are young men possessing all the capacities for a dignified and manly conduct: theirs, through the hard industry of others, are all the qualifications of education and competence. They are surrounded with circles offering every facility to happiness and pure enjoyment. And what do these young men do with all this wealth of possession? I will sketch a few of the courses into which they permit themselves to be seduced. One, just out of his teens, affects a manly superiority; calls "the governor" slow; orders his tailor to make garments in a "fast" fashion; cultivates an elegant beard; secures a massive chain, and if possible, a splendid ring. His boots are a very important item to his manliness; and then what deliberation upon the color of his gloves, and the flexibility of his cane! As he steps from the door of his plodding father, he puts a finish to his appearance by lighting a cigar, and with a hat *à la mode*, walks out, a ready prey for the painted woman, and an advertisement for

men on the look-out for unsophisticated manhood. I do not say that a young man may not have a gold chain, and trousers made in the height of fashion, if he likes—there is no religion in not having these things; but for the sake of all that is manly, do not let a young man think that this is to make a worthy use of life—to be a show thing to be looked at in the streets.

But a young man may have higher aims; he may be somewhat literary in his tastes; may have studied rules of etiquette, and may select associations that are irreproachable. He permits his vanity, however, to grow into a chronic craving for admiration. He affects insensibility to attract attention; falls into the modern fashion of a supercilious apathy; looks unimpassioned under the most eventful circumstances, and twirls the points of his moustache with elegant *nonchalance*. Repudiating all domestic and common interests, he becomes valueless to humanity. The most beautiful emotions of man's nature become frigid. His self-absorption grows into a conceit which relieves others from the duty of

considering him. He never blesses, is never blessed. Ineffective in youth, unloved in manhood, he becomes testy and splenetic in old age, and dies at length unmissed and unmourned. And this is all he has made of a life that once bore so much of promise.

There is another, over whom my heart's affections linger with a longing solicitude: I mean the clever and facetious young man. He has quick parts, can sing well, or give recitations; ever on the look-out for fun, he heaps up accumulating stores of witticisms and repartee; and can repeat in character, Mrs. Caudle, Mrs. Brown, or the newest offering of this literary school. No circle of his friends is complete without him; the evening party must be delayed if he is engaged; every body likes him—young men and ladies alike call him “such a good fellow.” And there is much that is good in him—his readiness and ability to make hours of recreation brighter are not to be despised; but his kind-heartedness and endowments fit him for something grander than to be a man who merely amuses society. He himself suffers

loss ; neglect of solid reading and of elevated thoughts lowers his own tone ; the moral which he tacks on to the end of his recitation fails to clear the balance-sheet of his conscience in better hours ; the very friends that he has charmed will seek another than him in the important moments of their life. He will find himself set aside ere long ; his influence will die with the vivacity of youth ; he has no acquirements that are cared for to carry into riper manhood ; and then nothing is more revolting than the merely farcical and comic old man. This is all *he* has made of life ; he has been the butterfly for sunny hours, and has gone out when sterner days came.

Would that my descriptions might cease here ; but the tale of failure has not run out. There are young men with the pathway of honor open before them, but who turn from it, and in pompous dash care for none of the things that would make for their peace. Like dogs kept hungry, that their scent after the game may be keener and more impelling, they slip the leash of what they term their

“mother’s apron-string,” and burst upon life with a dare-devil spirit that defies control. The shades of evening find them prowling under the mask of darkness after every pernicious gratification. Their imaginations have been polluted with the vile literature secretly circulated. From the dice or billiard-table they go to the lighted hall, where prostitutes decked in fine apparel mingle in the waltz and ply their miserable arts, and thence to the house where I will not follow, and of which the Scriptures say, that “is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.”

A young man in a London warehouse was solicited to spend such a night as I have glanced at. He refused. “What a fool you are to be so dull,” said the tempter. “We’ll wait a while and see who is the fool,” said the young man. In ten years’ time the tempter was in a dishonored grave, and the other was rising to affluence.

You young men who sneer at religion as weakness and call godliness hypocrisy, it is you who are the hypocrites. You have risen

many a morning after a night of sin, and have felt how satiety and loathing were making deep footprints in your nature. You have seen the shamelessness and hollowness of wickedness, and have been too cowardly to say that you saw it. You have laughed at virtue while you were bearing agonies in your flesh which were horrible and indescribable. In ten years the tempter I have spoken of was in his grave; and if the brief life and dreadful end of thousands of young men in England could be portrayed, it would be the most awful tragedy ever told. Men would be horrified as they read it, and the ghastly memory would haunt them for years. Ah, men do not know it. These young men go from the great cities to die in country homes, or they lie solitary in the upper chambers of lodging-houses in back streets. Angel sisters are kept from sights which they could not comprehend. Nurses shrink from the foul and loathsome atmosphere. And this is what they have made of life—a murdered manhood; not living out half their days: a past all loss, a future all blackness. Oh, where

are our tears if they do not fall over numbers who are dying every day in such chambers and with such demons of remembrance?

I have read somewhere of an eagle in the Far West. Soaring with steady wing, he saw far below him the grand scenes of American nature, clothed in the first snows of early winter. As he rose higher towards the blue heaven, his keen eye saw floating on the distant river, whose margin was already frost-bound, the carcass of a huge buffalo. He paused in his upward flight; descended to settle and revel on this feast of corruption. He was borne calmly down the stream towards the fall and the rapids which lay below. Gorged with his foul meal, with drooping wing and dormant energies, he slept on the foetid mass, and amid the oozing putrefaction. The blood, stiffened by the frost, bound his feet to the remains of the carcass; and onwards was he borne until the roar of the cataract thundered on his ear. He struggled for liberty; his powers had been enfeebled with satiety; his drooping wings were bound to the frozen blood; his wild

cries awoke the echoes; he made frantic efforts to throw off his horrid companion; looked up to the blue heaven he had abandoned. It was too late: hurried over the rapid, he was sucked into the boiling cataract, and dashed to destruction on the rocks beneath. How does such an illustration find its analogy in human life! "His own iniquity," saith the Scripture, "shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins." There is a deep and awful mystery in the downward progress of souls, when he who once was the master of sin becomes the "slave of sin." Alas, there are scores of men in every neighborhood who would give all they have to begin life again. There was a time when they never intended to be vicious; but step by step they lowered themselves. Shame, truth, self-respect died. The lower elements of their nature first were freely indulged, then became importunate, then exacting, then domineering, then uncontrollable.

Dear young man, the pride of a mother, the hope of a father, with an intensity of

yearning love I conjure you to pause ere you go into the way of sinners. If your feet have turned aside, retrace, I beseech you, your steps. Your strong "I will" now, may, through God's mercy, turn you from the pit of infamy. But soon weaker will be your will, dimmer your sense of moral beauty, more desperate your passions, till at length you will feel bound, and then find yourself borne over the rapids a lost and helpless wreck.

But our view of life demands other considerations than those that relate to time and personal dishonor. It is a grand thing to live. A thousand times have I blessed God for this great gift of life. But it is serious also. Life has its *responsibilities*. Influence, like all things else, is imperishable. Nothing perishes. The leaves of autumn do not perish; they enrich the earth. The fuel of our fires sends curling upwards its light smoke, which bears its properties for other uses. The broken fragments of the mountains, through torrent and tempest, nourish plants and renovate the earth. Not an act you per-

form, not a word you speak, can wholly perish. It was probably this that Jesus Christ meant when he spoke of the idle words for which we shall give account at the day of judgment ; that is, our words which go from us as light as air may be making others better or worse, and carrying forward their consequences to the judgment. Sin is imperishable. Sin, like the soul, has immortality stamped on it : when once done, *it cannot be undone*. Even a saved man's sins are imperishable in the consequences. David, the king of Israel, sinned ; alas, how pitilessly ! He repented, and poured out a psalm of contrition that has ever since been the liturgy of humbled souls, and every verse of which seems vocal with a groan ; but he could not undo the sin. In his own days the enemies of truth blasphemed through him, and since that time, in every generation, wicked men have encouraged themselves in wickedness because of that great crime, and the atheist has barbed his arrow in the blood of that murder. Voltaire, when he came to die, longed that his blasphemies against Christ

should be expunged from his writings. Ah, he wished what was impossible. His errors led to all the horrors of the French Revolution, and have shattered the peace of thousands since. A drunkard may obtain forgiveness ; but his example may have taught his own son to brutalize himself. A young man may turn away from the evil courses he followed ; but he may leave the silly youth whom he first tempted to go floating down to the bottomless pit.

There is a thought that often appals me. It is nothing, as it seems, for the seducer to play upon innocence, to instil poison into her sweet affections and her maidenly instincts. He has done, as he thinks, a manly thing when he has crumpled up the beautiful flower of her chastity, and left it to be fouled in the mire. Ah, hard is the father's shame and the brother's scorn she bears. Cold are the streets that she treads at night, and lonely is the garret where she soon lies down to die. What cares he ? Perhaps in a beautiful home he has forgotten her and her child. His turn comes at length to die. If con-

science puts in a reminder, he calls the deed an "indiscretion" of his youth, which signifies little. O man, it *shall* signify ; as sure as there is a God in heaven, thou shalt meet again that lost one to whom thou didst open the door of shame, of infamy, and of ruin. Her own lips shall tell thee how thou didst help to put out in her all that is pure, and to send her into the streets an outcast. It *shall* signify ; that child of neglect shall claim thee as its father—an unerring finger shall point it to thee. Before God and holy angels it shall tell thee of its bare infant feet on snowy street flags, of night watchings at omnibus steps, and of the ignorance, and wretchedness, and foul examples, through which its struggling life was passed, and which left it no chance of virtue. From thee it shall demand account of those paternal duties which thou didst incur and didst never discharge. Yes, it shall signify. Oh, there is a solemn irony of Scripture when it saith, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth ; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart,

and in the sight of thine eyes : *but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove the cause of sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh.*" *

Would that my address to young men could be in a happier and more joyous tone. But

* There is a sin of which I can hint only to you. Alas, its terrible temptations and its awful consequences are becoming frightful. It is not safe to omit notice in an appeal to a young man who may be entering life in a great city. If you could know the little that has come to my knowledge, your very hairs would stand on end. I could tell you of the finest physical constitutions, which, after twelve months' tampering with this perilous fascination, have become pitiable wrecks of disease. I could tell you, on medical authority, of men now dragging out a useless existence, with reason dethroned, and drivelling in idiotcy. And the punishment once done to the flesh does not depart. Life ends in early death, or is a long suffering of humiliation ; yea, worse still, the suffering is perpetuated in the third and fourth generations. Young men starting in life have none to tell them these things, therefore I have forced myself to the hateful task. The displeasure of God against this sin is awful. What would you think of a man who should pluck a flower from a yawning chasm, when there were ninety-nine chances to one that he would fall into the abyss below, and even if extricated, be scarred and begrimed to the end of his days?

life has such a tragic side to multitudes in our epoch, that I am compelled to deal with the causes of this failure and misery. It is imperative that the ground be cleared of the hinderances before I can offer, in subsequent lectures, the stimulus and encouragement. One other reflection, therefore, on account of its infinite import, I am bound to present. This brief existence of yours, my brother, is giving the coloring to immortality. The endless life beyond the grave will take its character from what you are now. You are the child of eternity; you have now your time of probation; you have your one earthly life to live, and upon what you make it will depend all that will follow through the ages of immortality. Every sinful habit you form here may cling like a leprosy to the soul there; every depraved passion you nourish here may perpetuate its black defilement there. "The child is father to the man," saith the proverb. A young man of sense knows that he will be as a master what he made himself as an apprentice; and as a man, what he made himself as a youth. He knows, too,

that character is not built up by one or two, but by the constant series of actions. So the daily thoughts and acts of your earthly life are forming your character for the vast existence of which you are an heir, and which lies beyond the grave.

The late Archbishop Whately, in some annotations on Lord Bacon's second essay, has mentioned a very remarkable phenomenon connected with insect-life, and has recorded that it often occurred to him as a very impressive analogy of a future state. You know that every butterfly—the Greek name for which, it is remarkable, is the same that signifies also the soul, Psyche—comes from a caterpillar—in the language of naturalists, called a larva, which signifies, literally, a mask. Now there is a tribe of insects called ichneumon-flies, which inhabit and feed on these larvæ. The parasitical flies have a long, sharp sting, which pierces the body of the caterpillar, and whereby they deposit their eggs on the inward parts of their victim. But, strange to say, the caterpillar thus attacked goes on feeding, and apparently thriving quite

as well as those that have escaped. But when the period arrives for the close of the larva-life, then the evil is made manifest. Caterpillars assume the pupa-state from which they emerge butterflies; and it is then that the difference appears between those that have escaped the parasites and those that were the victims of them. Beautiful and awful analogy! There are many who, as to the outside, look like other men. They dress well, look well. The sin is preying only on their immortal part; and when they have laid aside that which merely belonged to their physical life, then the soul shall stand, with all its poverty and scars and shrivelled places, naked and open. "The kingdom of heaven is within you," said Christ to his followers; and so are the elements of hell in other men.

Prodigious is the inconsistency of some modern reasoners. They believe in the immortality of the soul. They see that the man is the development of the boy, and that the acts of the youth leave their impress on the whole after-life. They say law is inflexi-

ble, and that miracles therefore are impossible. They affirm that justice is so exact that its penalty must fall on its proper victim, and that therefore Christ's death is not vicarious. But somehow at this point all their reasoning falls to pieces. According to them, man in the future life is not to be dealt with after this inflexibility of law and this exactness of justice. According to them, up to the moment of death law goes in a straight, unbending line; why then, in the name of all pretence of reason, does it fail at that point, so that wickedness, which has met with its exact punishment in this world, fails to meet with it in that coming one? Dear young man, fearlessness as to what that future may be is stark madness. It is folly for which there is no name, for a man all through his earthly life to bear the traces of the indolence and self-willedness of his youth. But oh, what must it be for all the future and eternal life to bear the traces of the wrongs that have been done to the soul in this? What must it be for all the possible features with which the soul entered on this life—truth, purity, love,

faith—not only to have lain undeveloped, but to have been quenched? Let me conjure and entreat you to look at this subject. Do not, for the sake of all that is dear to you, close your eyes to it. Let the great future take its right place as you are starting in life. Be assured that the language of Scripture concerning those that have perished is prompted by God's yearning for your immortal well-being, while it accords with all the analogies of creation: “For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord, *therefore shall they eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.*”

Come then, young men, and let me persuade you to a worthy view of life. God meets you as you read these words, and offers to be the guide of your human life. The good God did not send you into his creation to be afterwards an accursed thing in the outer darkness. This life of yours, with its endowments and capabilities, may become a sublime and influential life—a blessed ascendancy, a tower of strength to men, regnant in all that is majestic, angelic, and godlike.

Hear how Divine counsel speaks to you: "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love folly? Turn you at my reproof: *behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you; I will make known my words unto you.*" Nor will life thus passed be too earnest to be happy. Yours will be the happiness—not of animal enjoyments merely, not purchased with stabbing your self-respect, not followed with the heart-sobs of those who love you, but of one who is bringing into use the higher and diviner faculties of your nature. Your intelligence will be fed by knowledge, your soul will be ennobled by purity, your tastes will be in harmony with sweet sounds and beauty, your conscience will be kept in peace, and your heart's emotions will have play in ways that leave no bitterness, but oftentimes swell into rapture. Believe me, the only thing that can give meaning and glory to your life is, to resolve most resolutely that you will not be enslaved, will not be degraded, will not be plunged into the mire and foulness of sin, but will live according to a life-plan of real nobleness. Remember, no one can do this for you. Your

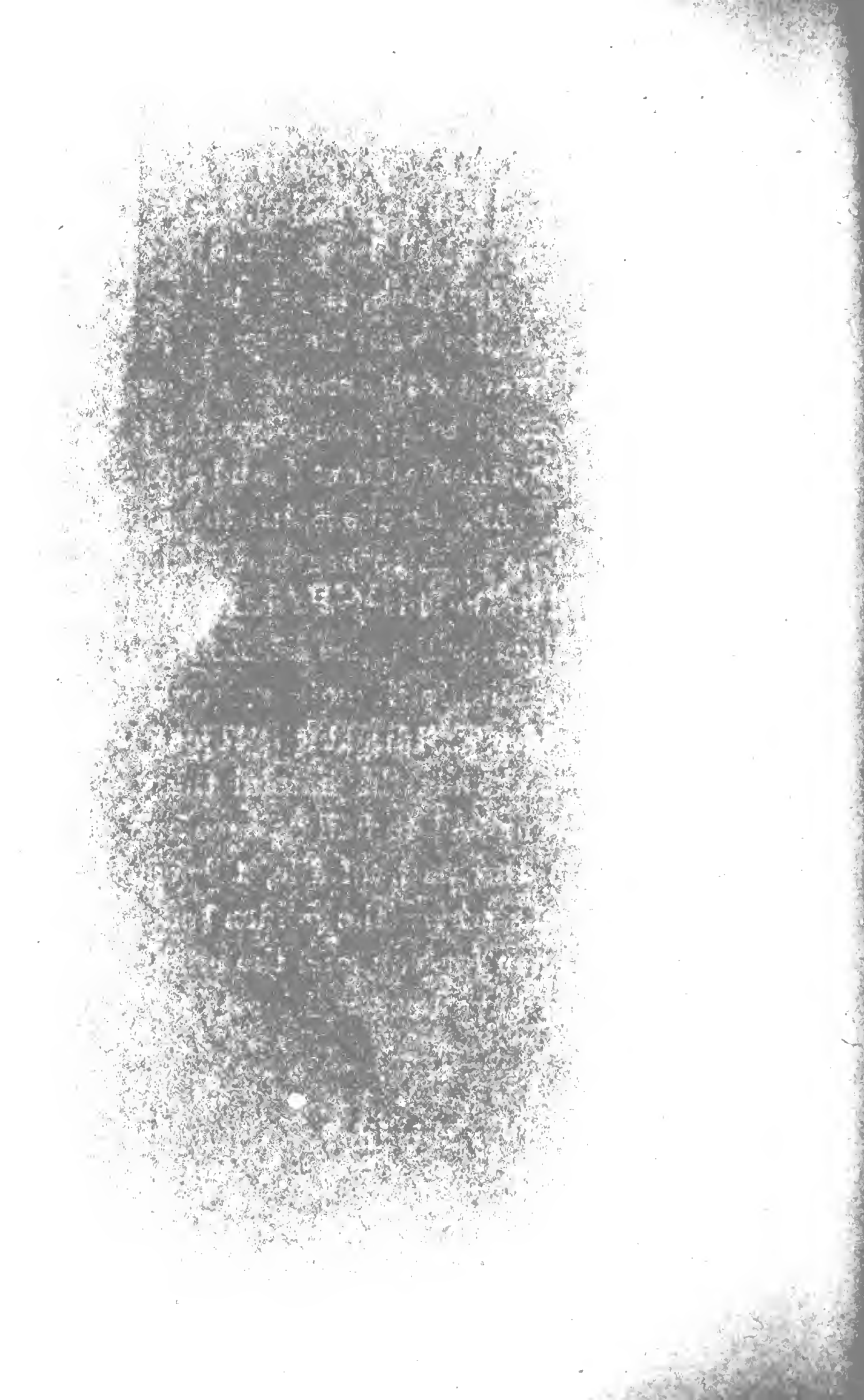
life is in your own hands; and God has so placed you among creatures, that *He* will not do you saving good *without your consent*. You may be a poor waif on the winds of temptation, drifted to whatever abyss of destruction they hurry you; or you may be a son of God, victorious over sin, ranking with the earth's great ones, and followed with blessings. And then, and then, when the final issue comes, and you lie down to die, instead of regrets, yours may be the solid satisfaction that your life, from its very morning, has been consecrated to the side of goodness; and then, instead of a place with the wicked and the scorners, you may go into a heaven for which you are prepared, and into a life of glorious felicity that is to come, and into which you have been initiated down here.

Blessed be God, there is a short way to the life I recommend. There are two steps by which you may enter it. Obtain, first, forgiveness for the sins of the past. God offers you all the merits of Christ's atoning sacrifice. Through that great sacrifice he will receive you, and *remember* your sins no more.

In the blessed book, in every variety of form, in every glowing and rich expression, are you assured that pardon shall be granted to a repentant soul. Young man, this is the first step. Believe, and drop your burden of the sins of the past. Start a free man.

This is the second step: offer your life gratefully, lovingly, to the Friend and Saviour of your soul. Ask for his Spirit to help you: his ear will be swift to hearken. This love to him will make his yoke easy, will make the cross light, will make life to have a magnificent meaning, will make sorrow to wear a friendly guise, will break the force of temptation, will make sin the hateful thing. This will cause your feet to find "peace and pleasantness" on the path of life, till you reach the mansions where the golden gates shall be thrown open for you, and the angels shall tell you they have been waiting to welcome you.

Brother, will you try this life?



SKEPTICAL DOUBTS:

HOW YOU MAY SOLVE THEM.



SKEPTICAL DOUBTS:

HOW YOU MAY SOLVE THEM.

My object in this address is, to relieve the doubts on religious subjects which meet a young man on setting out in life. Such doubts have been very common. Nor is it to be wondered at. With some, to doubt is constitutional. They are not able to give easy credence to any tidings. With others, the very stupendousness of religious subjects causes the mind to pause in doubtfulness; the revelations of Christianity are so transcendent, that thought wavers before their very grandeur. There may be doubt, yet again, from those appalling miseries of human life which it is the mission of Christianity to heal; and no less from the strangely unchristian lives of Christian men. All such

doubts are to be treated tenderly. There are thousands of such doubters among young men at this hour; and they are not to be denounced, but helped.

On the other hand, you will, I trust, agree with me, that there is a pretence of doubting which is the simple outgrowth of flippant indifference or conceit. We hear Tennyson quoted, that there "lives more faith in honest doubt, than that in half the creeds." Let me, however, remind you, that Mr. Tennyson did not mean *resting* in doubt; he meant an "honest doubt," that was bent upon inquiry, and was open to conviction. He therefore speaks in this same passage of one:

"He fought his doubts, and gathered strength;
He would not make his judgment blind;
He faced the spectres of his mind,
And laid them : thus he came at length

"To find a stronger faith his own,
And power was with him in the night;
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone."*

Observe, a great character is not built up by doubting. There is weakness, not strength,

* In Memoriam, p. 143.

in doubts. Nor is it necessarily a mark of intelligence to doubt. Any scanty mind may doubt, just as a fool may hold a penny-piece to his eye, and say he has hidden the sun. On the subject of Christianity, there is a very common mistake which I would guard you against. Christian faith is not a mere assent to an orthodox creed; not a mere acceptance of a speculative system of opinion. Christian faith is a thing of will, of ingenuousness, of candor, and of loyalty. The unbelief that will be visited with judgment at the last day is, the wilful, stubborn, uncandid, prevaricious, unpersuadable unbelief. Easiness of temper does not make a just man; no more does easiness of credence make a believing man.

Conceiving then that you are honestly anxious to arrive at truth, I will endeavor in this address to meet some of the difficulties which once perplexed my own mind. *The being of God*, or the mystery attaching to the Divine existence, not unnaturally disturbs the mind upon the very threshold of religious inquiry. Assuredly a God eternal, all-knowing, and ev-

everywhere present is a mystery ; but to stand in the midst of a universe with endless marks of a designing hand, and to say there is no God, would be a greater and more appalling mystery. Lord Bacon says: "I had rather believe all the fables of the Talmud and Koran than that this universal frame is without a mind." May you not exaggerate this difficulty? Have you not the image of God in nature? Look at the light of the sun. It sends its rays through every cottage, every stream, and over every living thing, and yet it never contracts a stain, and takes no soil. It awakens the germs of life in organic nature, and they emerge in an endless variety of forms; it clothes the forests with a robe of verdure, paints the fields with countless flowers, and calls forth the song of thousands of birds. It unchains from their icy bands the mountain-snows, and sends myriad rills to make music through the valleys. It makes the gladness of childhood, and cheers the gloom of age. At the same time, it can photograph every mental emotion and every change of moral feeling. No subtlety can

deceive it; it pierces beyond the false look; it images the character with startling justice. It is no labor to the sun to do this. Endow this sun with mind; conceive that its rays not only pervade and photograph every object, but do so consciously. Have you not here an emblem of Him who takes this image of light?

Let me, my friend, guard you against the young man who whispers in your ear that he does not believe in God. You will mostly find one of two things—either that the creed of the atheist has been adopted by him without two hours' reflection on the matter, or is an after-thought to make him comfortable in sin. How unreasonable would a man appear to you who should have come home from the Paris exhibition of industry, affirming that the edifice itself, its pictures, fountains, and manifold products were the falling together of chance, or self-developed. But he would be wise in comparison with the man who should see the myriad proofs of design in the atmosphere, the soils, the foliage, and his own frame, and affirm that there was no

Almighty Designer. Out of ten thousand proofs equally remarkable, let me mention one or two. Think of the egg of a bird, so made that wherever it is placed the chick shall float uppermost, so as to be near the warm bosom of its mother. Think of the adaptation of the camel to its life in the desert. Its feet, not like the hoofs of a horse, but cushioned with elastic pads, that do not sink into the sand, but spread over it; its stomach set round with water-sacs, from the supplies of which it can journey for days without coming to fresh water; its eyes overhung with eyebrows, and nostrils that can be firmly closed, whereby it is not incommoded with either the hot sand-clouds or the glare of the desert. Think of a gulf-stream, sixty miles broad and three thousand feet deep, which comes from the tropics every winter, which secures an equable temperature for the fishes, and prevents the seas at Stockholm and Norway from becoming a block of ice. While this is so, there is a polar current which rises in Greenland, and hastens to cool the tropics. These are single evidences of

design out of millions. And these myriad evidences in the heavens and earth, in every bird and insect, every flowering shrub and blade of grass justify the assertion that a man is a "fool" who says there is no God. I indeed admit to you that, to men oppressed with sin and darkness, it is difficult to know and trust God as the Creator. His immeasurable vastness seems to place him far from us; but I shall soon show to you that God is made known to his creatures through Christ. He who has not thought it unworthy to unfold to man in the heavens the magnificence of his works, has not thought it unworthy of himself to win back his creatures' obedience and love by sending his Son as a man. Christ has interpreted God to us. We understand God in him. We know how to seek him, to find him, to trust him, to love him.

After the existence of God, that of an *immortal spirit*, possessed by every human being, lies at the basis of all religion. The argument would be too metaphysical to prove here the immortality of the soul. I can only suggest to you one or two considerations. There has

been a universal consent among the wisest philosophers of all times and nations, that the soul remains after the body. "The consent of all," said Cicero on this subject, "is the voice of nature." Observe also, that it is by the soul we know of the existence of a universe. All sensation is the recognition of effects on our senses, but that recognition is through consciousness or mind. Note also, that the body changes, but the spirit remains. A man may lose his hands or eyes, and the loss may have no effect whatever on the soul. Consider again, that matter never perishes. If there is one axiom in philosophy that is certain, it is this, that while particles of matter may pass into new combinations, they never cease to have existence. You may well, then, ask with Dr. Young:

"Can it be,
Matter immortal, and shall spirit die?
Above the nobler shall less noble rise?
Shall man alone, for whom all else revives,
No resurrection know? Shall man alone,
Imperial man, be sown on barren ground,
Less privileged than grain on which he feeds?"

Observe once more on this subject, there are manifold proofs that the soul has in this state only the dawn of its being. The animals reach perfection in a few years but men, at death, are only beginning to use their faculties. The principle of thought, reason, and hope within them has here only glimpses, outreachings, and aspirations of a higher life. Are not these yearnings, this sense of incompleteness, prophecies of a future life? Our lives here are not the tones of perfect harmony, but rather like stringed instruments being attuned for celestial melody. And, alas, what inequalities, what sufferings, what wrongs have some to endure here that *require* another state for vindication and rectification also! If, therefore, you find one argument against the immortality of the soul, you will readily find a hundred for it.

A further source of doubt is, *a false impression respecting holy scripture*. You may have thought that the Bible, being called a revelation from God, would be like a book written in heaven, and altogether different from hu-

man works. But, in infinite wisdom and mercy, this has not been God's mode of revelation. He has condescended to reveal his mind through the history, the follies, the virtues, the sins, and struggles of men. This history is both human and superhuman. It is human, for the men who wrote it carried into it the peculiarities of their age and their culture. It is superhuman, for it truly and faithfully tells the dealings of God with the first races of men, and afterwards through Christ.

In the Old Testament history you have records of men who lived in an earlier and ruder period of humanity; but the writing or the compilation of these records has been controlled so as to teach the awfulness of sin, the safety of righteousness, and the faithfulness of Jehovah. Dreadful is it to be told of the incest of Lot; but it is merciful that we have a justification of the warnings against the licentious nations of Moab and Ammon, whose origin is thus narrated. It is painful to follow the history of Saul, but it is merciful that we have such a vivid picture of the

miserable fruits of a self-love that poisoned otherwise noble impulses. Through all the records of men in the Old Testament, you are taught, as in the life of Jacob, that every wrong act has a seed of evil in it, whose bitter fruits the doer has to eat, and that God's providence is perpetually controlling the good and the evil for the education of men and of nations.

Look at the book of Psalms, the liturgy of prayers and praises for all ages, the sacred ballads for humanity. There is much that is human in these Psalms; but if God had sent down to us songs composed by the angels, they would have been valueless by the side of those in this incomparable book. While I am in this world of fierce temptation, of suffering, and of moral weakness, what I want is, not so much angelic musings and raptures, as the prayers of a man tempted, struggling, suffering, fallen as I am; and yet a man ever reaching with such sobs of penitence and intense heart-cries after God. I mourn David's sin and sufferings, but I feel grateful that the Scriptures have preserved to me his Psalms,

which interpret the fiercest beatings of my heart, the lowliest confessions of my moral besetments, and the deepest aspirations of my nature.

Look again at the epistles of the New Testament: you have here the records of churches which fell, some into one error, others into another. But these errors are such as are common to humanity. Admirable, therefore, is the wisdom whereby inspired doctrines and consolations are conveyed, not in any abstract method, but in their relation to the very tendencies of our nature. Your objection, therefore, to the Bible, that it is so human, is from an utterly mistaken impression of the mode in which revelation could be best made to men, and from forgetfulness of its deep, profound, and most precious adaptation to human life.

And here I cannot help adverting to the moral unfairness of infidelity. In a recent conference of working-men, one of them told the meeting that the history of the fall of man, in the second chapter of Genesis, was so improbable that he rejected all which came

after. Perhaps the narrative is improbable to a mind intensely literal, unused to eastern modes of thought, and which cannot find the truth under those partially allegorical representations which most effectually teach the vast bulk of the human race. The same objections are urged against the sun standing still in the book of Joshua, and to the history of Jonah. I am not going to reply to these objections. Infidels do not want a reply. If they did, they would find scores. But what shall be said of the candor of a man who, because of such objections, rejects the Old Testament, which abounds in passages of the tenderest sympathy for the poor and for the suffering, which demands the most exact rectitude between man and man, and which taught a morality in those early days to which there is nothing at all approaching in the annals of Egypt, Greece, and Rome? Let me recommend you to turn to Leviticus 19:9, 10; Deuteronomy 24:13, 19-22.

See how the slavery of the nations was mitigated among the Hebrews by the enforcement of the principle—which the Gre-

cian and Roman law denied—that it was the duty of the master to treat his servants as men, to instruct them in his own religion, and to count them members of his household. Shame on men who have in the Bible such consideration for the toilers and such rebukes of oppressors, but who ignore all this, and hold up the Old Testament to scorn because of one or two difficulties to *their* understanding.* Nothing so loudly proclaims that such

* Not very long since, a public lecturer was proceeding to Sheffield, and in a railway train astounded me by arguing that the apostle Paul preached the gospel before Jesus Christ was crucified. A Sunday-scholar of seven years of age would have taught him better. I was lately in a large meeting in Pentonville, when an intelligent man, who avowed himself a skeptic, who had read Mr. Buckle's "History of Civilization," declared that men who believed the Bible could never be expected to attend to man's social condition; for that Christ taught, in John 6, that we were "not to labor for the meat which perisheth." Now mark, the very verse before the one quoted tells us that a multitude had followed Christ, not at all caring for what he would teach them, but because he had fed them with loaves and fishes. Their miserable motive he exposed, and bid them labor for meat which endured unto everlasting life. Suppose a son of this skeptic had taken what professed to be a letter from his mother, and singled out a clause from its context to bring the letter into contempt before a meeting, what would that father have called

infidelity is not a thing of "honest" doubt, but of a bad mind and of a bad heart. Difficulties there are in the Bible. I have studied most of those difficulties, and confess with gratitude that they have one by one disappeared. This I doubt not will be the case with them all. But to me it seems that I should deserve the contempt of man and the indignation of my Maker, if because of these difficulties, in times so remote and in usages so different from modern customs, I set aside the book which tells me of God's profound interest in my race, which reveals my relation to a spiritual world, which has purified the lives and pacified the consciences of millions, and which has made just and considerate their treatment of others.

Miracles which bear witness to divine revelations are made an occasion for doubt by some. Let us examine this objection candidly. Why are miracles not believed? "*They contradict*

such a son? A scoundrel. God probably pities him as he would not his son. But let young men take heed of reasoning which is not merely a reproach to candor, but to common intelligence.

experience." A few years ago M. Boutigny, at a meeting of the British Association, caused ice to be produced from a red-hot crucible. Surely this contradicted experience. "*They are incredible to reason.*" So is the fact that the sea once covered the beds of sea-shells on the tops of the highest mountains. "*The enemies of Jesus attributed miracles to magic.*" The very proof they were wrought; else they would have denied the facts, and not resorted to this pretence. "*They are impossible, for they suspend inflexible laws of nature.*" To this modern objection I reply, there are no laws of the universe except the direct agency of God. If, then, he interposes to arrest a subject-law, there is no suspension of the law of nature; the supreme law is still in operation. For example: By the inflexible law of gravitation, a ball dropped from the top of a tower falls to the earth. But suppose a man catches it in his hand, is the law of gravitation suspended? Not at all. A controlling law is brought into operation, to which that law is obedient. Thus you have the agency of God in miracles. Do not, I implore you,

be swayed by writers who find it the easiest of all things to multiply objections when they are utterly indifferent about finding replies. Remember that in the first ages miracles must have been worked, else Christianity, with the tremendous sacrifices it demanded, could not have gained a footing in the earth, much less have changed the religion of the Roman empire. Gibbon tried his strength to dispute this, but never did a man so signally fail.

An exaggerated estimate of the *strength of literary skepticism* has been another source of doubt in these days. There are three writers especially to whom this remark applies. The first is Dr. Colenso. He was believed to be a learned theological scholar. Never was an estimate more false; never did a more pedantic theologian take pen in hand. What pretensions had such a man to be a guide, who more recently tried to prove that there were no accredited prayers to Christ in the Bible, nor in the Prayer-book, nor in the Presbyterian Psalter? Thirty-four instances of direct prayer to Christ were at once pointed out in the Psalter; more than twelve prayers

to the Saviour were quoted as sanctioned by apostolic practice in the New Testament, and passages of prayer to the "Lamb of God" were appealed to in the Liturgy. If young men are to doubt, let not a literary blunderer like this have weight with them. At the time that the bishop of Natal's work came out, a gentleman was commiserated on the alleged overthrow of the Bible. "The Scriptures will be extinguished now," said the man of the world. The shrewd Yorkshireman replied: "Well, you see I have lived long enough to hear many prophecies of this nature; but the extinguisher has always been a wooden one, which the light has burnt through." My friend's figure has remarkably come true. Dr. Colenso had a reputation as an arithmetician; but this has well nigh gone, and his theological books are marked sixpence on back book-stalls.

In like manner have the two other critics failed to get into the world's thought. Some years ago, Dr. Strauss sent forth a so-called "Life of Jesus." The greater part of the gospel narratives were resolved into myths.

More recently another edition came out, and facts which in the first edition were called fabulous were now given as veritable history. Is the "critical faculty" of such a man a safe guide to young men?

Later still, M. Renan, acknowledging that it was impossible to doubt the substantial genuineness of the gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, presumed to patronize Christ and Christianity. And what was his conclusion? Do not start when I tell you: The Frenchman professes to believe that thousands of the most bigoted Jews, and of enlightened Greeks and Romans, renounced the venerable institutions of their fathers and embraced a religion which demanded the severest sufferings and sacrifices, because a woman under a love-spell of hallucination had *fancied* she had seen a young Galilean rabbi alive who was really dead! Just conceive what would now be the effect on Europe of a new religion whose fundamental fact had such puerile support. Why was it different on educated Romans? Do not say I am deceiving you when I tell you that M.

Renan professes to believe that the apostle Paul abandoned prejudice, station, privilege, prospects, and braved scorn, appalling sufferings, and a martyr's death, because he had been frightened in a thunder-storm! Talk about credulity, was there ever credulity like this? Alas, what monstrous absurdities will men believe rather than the plain testimony of Scripture! Woe to the dupes of a literary skepticism which changes its creed every five years!

It may be in addressing you, my friend, on the spirit of doubt which taints and enfeebles this age, that you have been influenced by what is deemed *the attitude of scientific men* towards Christianity. A flagrant and most mischievous impression is abroad that scientific men in our times are infidels. Very confidently do I affirm that it is not so. I have attended meetings of learned societies in London, and of the British Association in the country, and have heard these meetings spoken of as atheistic, when out of hundreds of scientific men there were not a dozen whose language could have justified such an impu-

tation. Such distinguished leaders of science as Professor Owen, Professor Phillips of Oxford, and Sir Roderick Murchison, would indignantly repudiate the charge of seeking to undermine the faith of England in Christianity; and in this they would have the sympathy of an overwhelming majority of scientific men in the British Isles. Your danger is not so much in the facts science has established, as in the false notions which have been caught up of these facts. A scientific discussion would be beside the object of this address; but note these accordances between one science and the Bible: Scripture affirms the late date of man upon the earth; so does geology—Sir C. Lyell says, “No discovery has shaken our belief in the extremely modern date of the human era.” Scripture teaches that the world was once covered by water; so does geology: “It is concluded as a fundamental maxim in geology,” says Professor Phillips, “that the whole area now occupied by dry land was once covered by sea.” Scripture teaches that God made the dry land to appear; and geol-

ogy affirms that the rocks, or dry land, have been upheaved from the waters. Scripture teaches that the beasts were created after their kind; that is, each group made up of a number of species; so does geology. The Bible, written for an unscientific age, has thus these marvellous agreements with science in its most recent developments. You perhaps hear of a solitary scientific mind tracing back man to a sea-shell; but another says, "The idea that a mollusk could become a fish, or a lizard a man, is worthy only of a madman, and gives but poor evidence of the progress of civilization at the present time."* Indeed, there is no utterance that looks adverse to Scripture which is not met by a decided divergence of opinion equally scientific.

Turn from these questionings to the history of Jesus Christ as contained in the four gospels. The most consummate learning of the enemies of the faith cannot invalidate these gospels. Their genuineness has borne every critical test of the most advanced

* See Quarterly Journal of Geological Society, No. 86, p. 88. See note, p. 129.

scholarship. The evidence for their absolute truthfulness is immeasurably greater than for the authenticity of any secular book which the past has transmitted to us. You believe that eight hundred years ago a conqueror landed in England who abolished the Saxon monarchy. On testimony better than that for the belief in William the Conqueror have you the fact confirmed to you, that eighteen hundred years ago, in a strip of fair and sunny land in Asia—a land which for two thousand years had been the theatre of events which marked it out as the scene for some grand evolvment of historic import—there appeared a Teacher from Galilee, just rising into the maturity of manhood. He unites in Himself the most unusual varieties of character. He has vast intellect and the tenderest sensibility; the calmest judgment and the keenest feeling. He is lowly, but always magnanimous; He is meek, and yet majestic; He is most compassionate to human frailty, but abhors human vice; He is despised, but never fretted; insulted, but never ruffled; never is He charged with sin,

yet by a strange and precious sympathy He draws to Himself the sinful and the outcast. He is essentially human; is found at the marriage feast and the evening meal. He speaks parables which childhood can understand, and over which genius wonderingly lingers. His teaching is so profound, wise, and novel, that it for ever shades all the teaching of the wise men of antiquity. He did works which no other man had ever done. He invited all heavy-laden ones to come to him for rest, and announced that He was "the Light of the world." During a brief ministry, over five hundred men and women so believed in Him, that afterwards many of them laid down their lives for His sake. Very soon after His death upon the cross, when he startled his enemies by the loud cry, "It is finished," a "*vast multitude*" in Rome itself enrolled themselves as His disciples. This fact comes to us on the testimony of the heathen historian Tacitus; and Gibbon admits it must be received as unquestionably genuine.

This Jesus Christ we affirm to be the Son

of man and the Son of God. He is the Revealer of God. He pierced to the core of human misery, while he wielded the resources of omnipotence; he wound about his heart human sympathies, but now sits at the right hand of God exalted. My brother, I solemnly tell you that to refuse to believe in Christ after the evidence afforded will violate your candor, will trample on the rectitude of your reasoning, and will bring on you consequences which you will eternally deplore. I cannot utter words that deserve comparison with those of Christ himself: "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness." "He that rejecteth me hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

You may ask, Can a man be lost for *sincere* doubt? If a man clings to this doubt, if he will not candidly inquire, if he refuses to receive testimony, he will be lost; not because of his doubt, but because of his obstinacy. This talk of sincere doubting is often very unreasonable talk. A man may sincerely

doubt whether it is well to sow corn in the autumn or spring, and he may sow his fields in July; but his sincerity will not save him from bankruptcy or the workhouse. A schoolboy may sincerely doubt the necessity of learning Euclid, history, and geography—he may refuse the testimony of wiser heads; but his sincerity will not save him from going into mercantile or professional life a dunce, and the chances are that he will rue his so-called sincere doubt to the end of his days. You, my brother, will soon pass into a world shrouded with impenetrable darkness. There is but one voice which can tell you of a way whereby your spirit hereafter may reach a region of light and felicity. Should you close your ear to that voice, and nurse your doubts, and refuse to investigate, then let me tell you that there can be nothing for you at the last day but “shame and everlasting contempt.”

Observe also, if you want demonstration that will overbalance all difficulties, you will never find it. In the affairs of this life men act on the *preponderance* of evidence. If there should appear twenty reasons for a

course of action and only five against it, he would be reckoned a fool who became swayed by the five, and refused to inquire further. In mercantile life, the men who will never decide and act till they have reasons which exclude all doubt, are left behind in the progress of society, and become the poor and despised. Your condition in this world is a test whether you will be true and docile. If you want light, there is abundance to guide you; if you choose darkness, God will not compel your belief.

I remind you, again, that no man has ever grown wise or good, or left a permanent impression on his age, as a doubter. The heroes of all times have been men of faith. Read the Book itself. The Bible is a locked treasure to prejudice, but it never fails to satisfy candor. As you stand outside one of our ancient cathedrals, and look up at its chancel window, all looks cold, unmeaning, and uninteresting. But, as has been well said, when on a sunny morning you have entered that chancel, "how changed is that window! It is now gorgeous in beauty, and

glows with life. Cold and dreary outside, it is warm and radiant within. Instead of being incomprehensible and obscure, it is full of meaning and glorious harmony." Such is the difference between reading the Bible as a doubter or as a critic, and going to it as one interested in its contents and willing to be taught.

Follow for a moment the course of two young men. Your acquaintance will supply the sketch readily. See one coming in the morning from the chamber where he has looked with affection and trust into the face of his Saviour; has supplicated strength to meet the day's duties and temptations; and has pondered the words, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." He enters the family circle to meet the mother's smile, a brother's greeting, and a sister's cheery welcome. His father, with proud joy, consults him as an equal. He is a firm link in the family chain of happiness. See him as he stands on the floor of the warehouse with uprightness. The tricky trader, when he can-

not cheat him, respects his honor. He chooses friendships that are elevating. No profane scorner walks by his side; no impure profligate soils the atmosphere of his home. He spends his evenings amid cheerful enjoyments, ennobling elevations, or useful ameliorations.

Contrast the other. He rises from a prayerless bed; drags down stairs his wearied frame at the latest possible moment; the older members of the family have gone off to their several duties. As for him, the debauch of the last night makes every thing wrong: the coffee is thick; the servant slow; the very cat's quietness upon the hearth irritates him, and with a kick he relieves his pent-up discontent. To his mother he is rude; the younger children have scampered away at his approach, saying their "big brother is so sulky." The clock sounds; he is off to business. The whole day he is confused and hindered by the remembrance of the last night's pollution, or the planning for the coming evening's pleasure. When the evening has come, he goes where he will degrade

young women in a way which would arouse his direst indignation should another do the same to his sister; or he enters scenes where he would die with shame if his mother or sister could follow him. And this is the young man whose law is a miserable and hateful selfishness, or who on a Sunday afternoon reads an infidel book for five minutes, and then says, "Ah, I knew the Bible was false, and Christians all hypocrites." Poor pitiable wretch! as if the judgment of such a man was of the slightest value against Scripture.

And observe, the end will come. A nurse very recently was summoned to a sick-bed in Paris. The invalid was a young Englishman. Before she would enter upon her duties, she asked if the sufferer was a Christian. Upon being answered in the affirmative, she said: "I have seen such horrible sights, and heard such wailings in the dying chambers of ungodly and dissolute men, that I dare not now undertake to nurse another such a one." Tronchan, in his memoirs of Voltaire, says: "I wish that those who had been perverted by his writings had been present at his death.

It was a sight too horrid to witness." These are awful facts and foreshadowings after a life of infidel pleasure.

Let me add a test of your sincerity. One of the most accomplished and gifted of authoresses has told us that dark doubts on divine subjects once shrouded her spirit. As she looked up at midnight to the vault of the heavens, and saw the stars moving in serenity and order, the thought came over her troubled spirit, "The Creator of those orbs must take an interest in me, his rational creature. I hold to nothing but a dim hope of his existence. I will take my dark mind to him, and ask him for light. Prayer shall be with me the '*test of truth.*'" To that sincere cry the answer came. Her heart, intellect, and conscience, found rest in Christ; the Bible became to her an exhaustless fount of wisdom; in mathematical culture and in musical taste she became distinguished, and her life became signally useful. Two eminent men were lifted out of their doubts by the promise in Luke 11:13. "If the Bible be true," they reasoned, "the Lord will give his

Spirit to them that ask him. We will put this promise to the proof." The one—John Newton—became the most influential preacher of the gospel in the British metropolis; the other—William Wilberforce—became one of the best, most useful, and most honored of statesmen.

My brother, let this be the test of your sincerity. Will you earnestly and perseveringly ask God to fulfil this promise in you?

I shall close this address with twelve articles, which may be termed THE CREED OF THE INFIDEL.

1. That Book is to him an imposture and pretended revelation, which furnishes the only explanation ever offered of human misery, suffering, and death; which responds to man's universal craving for immortality, and throws the clearest light upon a future state; which presents the sublimest views of the compassion of the Creator; which paints a picture of man which has had an exact transcript in the history of all nations, and on behalf of which myriads rise up to testify that it has been a ceaseless impulse to aspi-

rations, a comfort in their trials, and has taken away the fear of death.

2. He believes that the earlier narratives of the Bible were fabrications intended to glorify the Jewish nation: but somehow these fabrications are totally unlike the legendary traditions of Greece and Rome; for instead of making their ancestors gods and heroes, they make them slaves, and tell a history of Jacob and his sons which covers their progenitors with infamy; and strange to say, these fabrications imposed upon later prophets, who were the sternest denouncers of falsehood, and are now imposing upon six millions of Jews, who, with a tenacity unparalleled and sacrifices ceaseless, cling to the ritual and history of their ancestors.

3. He believes that by some unaccountable species of literary deception, unlettered or fanatical men have pretended to give four narratives of the founder of Christianity, which the greatest modern critics confess are "the very gold of simplicity, integrity, and truthfulness," and which present an image of Jesus Christ that brings most vividly into

view the very perfection of humanity, that has furnished a model for the noblest spirits among men, and that surpasses in beauty and grandeur all that poetry ever sung or human genius ever conceived.

4. He believes that the writers of the New Testament were either knaves or fools; and yet they taught the purest, wisest, most elevated, and most self-sacrificing system of morals the world has ever seen.

5. He believes that in the most enlightened and skeptical age of the Roman Empire, thousands of men were such arrant fools as to give credence to a history of Christ which was full of lies, and to a record of miracles which had never been worked, and this at a time so near to the events, that an imposture could not have escaped detection for an hour.

6. He believes that "a vast multitude" of Romans, Greeks, and Jews deserted, for a fanatical superstition, the splendid temples of their fathers, the schools of philosophy of which they had been proud, and the religion of their ancestors, which had been enriched by the grandest historical associations.

7. He believes that the early propagators of Christianity, and the believers in it, acted altogether contrary to ordinary motives of weak or bad men; they embraced a creed which, instead of gaining them aught, exposed them to the most diabolical cruelties, and held to their testimony in the face of tortures, banishment, and a shameful death.

8. He believes that, although Christianity is a lying system of priestism or fanaticism, it nevertheless, according to irrefutable testimony, abolished the ferocious deeds of the amphitheatre, overthrew the horrid rites of paganism, introduced an era of benevolence, and marked a new starting-point of progress for the human race.

9. He believes that twelve obscure, penniless Jews, with a higher wisdom than was claimed by Socrates, Cicero, or Plato, taught the only religion which has been proved to be adapted to every country and every condition of man on the surface of the wide globe.

10. He believes that the Christian Sabbath, or the weekly seventh-day rest, is an

institution indispensable to the present physical condition of men and animals; that without it modern civilization would bring to myriads of men and beasts unbroken toil, disease, and premature death; but that this seventh-day rest is a purely human institution, having come, he scarcely knows how, from men who were foisting on the world false and illiterate traditions under the name of divine revelations.

11. He believes that the writings of the Christian Scriptures, although an ill-constructed collection of falsehoods, have never been proved false by the subtlest ingenuity of their enemies, but have been most firmly held to be true by men of the profoundest intellect, of the most resolved and persevering investigation—the very scholars, thinkers, and master-spirits of humanity, such as Newton, Bacon, Milton, Boyle, Locke, Pascal, Davy, Chalmers, and a host besides.

12. He believes that those great nations of Europe which are immensely in advance of all the nations of antiquity, and of all the heathen and Mohammedan nations of Asia at

this time, and which are distinguished for their liberty, wealth, culture, arts, schools, asylums, charity, and beneficence, have become so while under the sway of a miserable system of religious superstition, which a few unlettered fanatics palmed upon the world eighteen centuries ago.

Skeptic, is this thy creed? Then, O man, great is thy credulity!

Trifler, who callest the Bible "weak folly," take heed! thy despising of Christianity may be shown to be thy folly and culpable weakness, which will have to be deplored by thee for ever.

My doubting brother, you may turn the tables when reproached with the beliefs of Christians, and point to the absurdities involved in THE CREDULITY OF INFIDELITY.



POWER OF CHARACTER:

HOW YOU MAY ASSERT IT.



POWER OF CHARACTER:

HOW YOU MAY ASSERT IT.

ALTHOUGH it is perfectly true that we may so exalt our importance as individuals as to feed self-conceit; although as a rule men think they have more talents than they really possess, it is nevertheless certain that there is not one man in ten who makes the most of himself for the purpose for which he was created. The great waste of life is wasted or perverted power. What noble youths come out of schools and colleges; how few afterwards make their lives noble. With what opportunities do many enter upon business and professions, and afterwards sink into the grave with scarcely a trace to indicate that they ever lived. There have been hundreds

who could have rivalled the patriotism of Hampden, or the humanity of Howard, or the eloquence of Chatham, and who have left behind them no one memorial of their existence. It is recorded that a fellow-student once said to Paley: "You are a great fool to waste your best years in the dissipations of a university; you have talents for something better." To multitudes of gifted young men has the like thing been said, but said in vain. Paley took the hint, which was roughly given. And now "there is no name in the English church that stands higher than his, and no name in the vast circles of English literature that has a more permanent fame."

The great things of this world have been accomplished by individuals. Vast social reformations have originated in individual souls. Truths that now sway the world were first proclaimed by individual lips. Great thoughts, that now are the axioms of humanity, proceeded from the centre of individual hearts. No warlike host delivered the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt,

but one man—Moses. No senate of statesmen raised Israel to a pitch of greatness that proclaimed a theocratic nation to the world, but one man—David. No school of divines gave to England the Bible in the mother tongue, but one man—Wyckliffe. No learned society discovered America, but one man—Columbus. No association of science revealed the clue to interpret the laws of the universe, but one man—Galileo. No parliament saved English liberties, but one man—Pym. No assembly of theologians wrote the book, which next to the Bible has had the most potent influence on the English language and on English hearts, but one man—John Bunyan. No confederate nations rescued Scotland from her distracted councils, from her political and ecclesiastical enemies, but one man—Knox. No chambers of commerce taught Europe to abolish the restrictions of trade, but one man—Richard Cobden. Doubtless these men found their coadjutors; but all through the ages God has put immense honor upon individuals.

Young man, do not let others fashion what

your life shall be. Thomas Carlyle says somewhere that he would like to stop the stream of people in the Strand, and ask every man his history. But, "No," says the sage, "I will not stop them. If I did, I should find they were like a flock of sheep following in the track of one another." Alas, men begin to lose their individuality of conviction the moment they step into the world. Here is a young man beginning life's business. He feels, as he starts, an impulse to be pure and noble. He is surrounded by clerks in an office. A fortnight passes, and one evening, when he is hurrying home after office hours, he hears a fast young man whisper at the desk, "Poor fellow, he's off to be pinned to his mother's knee." Now, what would be the right thing for that youth to do? To say at once, "Yes, and God forbid I should ever forget what I owe to my mother." Let him say this, and the insulter would be shamed, if shame were not dead. He would respect the self-assertion of his fellow-clerk. Does the new-comer say this? No; his ears turn red; his face is suffused with a blush; and in a

night or two the poor weak one dares some trick of folly to show his independence, and to prove that home influences do not bind him. Thus, alas!—how shall I say it sorrowfully enough?—thus he makes a sacrifice of his individuality on the altar that a profligate clerk has built up for him; and then, step by step, he weaves around himself the bonds of pleasure, till, amid the dark storm of shipwrecked character, blasted reputation, wrung hearts at home, worn-out health, and miserable self-reproaches, he sinks to his unhonored grave, leaving only a memory of disgrace to those who have loved him.

I have known many a young man who has seen the right path as plain as noonday. God has mercifully flashed clear conviction of duty upon him. No mental mistake has hindered him. His judgment has been convinced; his feelings have been moved; he has felt sure that it would be better for him, for this life and for the next, to take a decided position on the side of God and righteousness. And what has hindered him? What has led to waste and self-remorse? Has he been per-

suaded by the wise? Has he been reasoned out of his convictions by the influential? No; he has been moved by the jeer of a dandy or the sneer of the coquette; he has quenched his conviction before the mocking taunt of some empty-brained street loungeur; has lowered his own high tone of morals lest he should seem *singular* in the little circle of worldly society surrounding him. Do you say, "Can a man set himself against society?" If society quenches the true in you, if it binds you, if it robs you of moral manhood, if it makes you its slave, there can remain no question to you as to what is your duty. Scorn to degrade yourself by yielding up your individuality to suit the whim of, it may be, the worthless and vulgar.

You are stepping into life, where you will find thousands who became vicious because they never formed the resolve to live nobly. Such men are the dead leaves that fall upon the stream and flow, not by any vital power or aim in themselves, but by the eddying current around them. There is many a sot who is imbruted, because he never determined

that he would not be a drunkard. There is many a useless one who has become a cipher, because he never resolved to give to his life a meaning. There is many a filthy blasphemer who is profane, because he never resolved that the foul oath should not soil his lips. There is many a defiled, polluted, and diseased one, because he never resolved that he would not be the companion of a whore. This is the sorrowfulest of all things—men ruined, sinking into sin, vulgarity, uselessness, vile-ness, not because they intended to be bad, but because they had not the courage to resolve to be good.

It is yet more deeply to be lamented that the young men who are thus ruined are mostly the open, the generous, and the frank. A cold nature that no one cares for, that is not wanted in the drinking-room, or smoking-room, or billiard-room, passes into manhood without hurt; but good-natured and gleeful young men have a weak side whereby they become a prey to the dissipated. They are companionable and sympathetic, therefore miscreants suck them by temptation.

It would be grateful to our feelings if this compromise of individual character were confined to the men who disregard the claims of virtue. It is by no means so. A philosophic statesman, J. Stuart Mill, in his *Essay on Liberty*, complains that no period of England's history has been so little marked by individual originality and force as our own. Certainly, whether we look upon the merely moral or the professedly religious circles of our country, we find everywhere the tendency to sink the man in the crowd, the Christian in the church. This shifting of personal responsibility from the one to the many is the secret alike of national and of individual ineffectiveness. Only look around you, and you will see hundreds who might assert for themselves, and for the cause of truth and philanthropy, a position of dignity and power, who are hindered by the maxims and habits of others.

There is a prevailing impression that it is women, with their quick sensibilities, who are the most susceptible to the influences of fashion and opinion. It admits of question whether this prevailing weakness in our days

is not on the side of young men. They do not so much make manifest their subserviency, but it is not the less deteriorating and real. Take a few examples.

Here, in a select neighborhood, is a young man who affects style. A place in the omnibus would fit his limited means. But no; the omnibus is all very well for men whose position is made, and for young fellows who have no standing in society; but for him, a horse and groom must form a part of his appointments. So he burdens himself, or speculates, or runs into debt, that horse or "trap" may be at command. And thus he, who by manly independence, and an expenditure according with his circumstances, could have risen to be honored and esteemed, shrinks away at length into some lower neighborhood, or drags out a vexed and discontented life, because he has forgotten the honor which he might have commanded at the outset, had he lived out his honest conviction, and not made himself a mere imitator.

Or take other cases. Yon beardless youth must smoke the, to him, nauseous cigar or

meerschau, because "Tom Grandeur" struts down High-street, looking large behind his curling smoke. Nay, "My Lord Meek," who cares no more for a hunt or race than the most refined and timid lady, enlarges his stables, buys a fine stud, makes up his book for the St. Leger; or, with a sore heart, joins the "throw off," caring not a whit for the brush, but very much that he may not be outdone in his equipage or establishment. All through society this abnegation of individuality weaves its web. Nor is the effect circumscribed to the frivolous and weak. Men think in cliques. It is intolerable to some to be out of fashion with the political opinion of their set. Never was contradiction so contemptible as that into which they are betrayed. It would be ludicrous, were it not too serious an indication of the want of principle. One month you hear men denouncing a political opinion and its prominent advocates, with all the vituperative energy of which their nature is capable. The next month, forsooth, they have adopted that precise opinion, and eagerly rush to share some leaf of the laurel which they hope will

fall upon them through the tergiversation of their party.

You have, alas, the same thing among so-called religious men. Many a young man has powers which would bless the church and the world, but for his maudlin regard for what others may think of him. He is, it may be, a young man whose father's religiousness gave him universal sway in his town or neighborhood. No workman but honored him; no cottager but felt the sweetness of his sympathy. The son of this great and good man is thrown among Ritualists. This is the religious fashion of the hour, and therefore it fascinates him. He adopts it, not because he is convinced of its truth, but because it suits what he deems his "æsthetic taste." Deplorably ignorant of the past struggles of English history, he is gratified with the crowded churches in which he can witness this pictorial religion of waving censers, purple-robed priests, and picturesque altar arrangements. He falls into the cant of saying that Protestantism is "unsymbolical." The white-robed choristers and lighted candles respond to

what he terms the "holy symbols" of the faith. He begins now to think the religion that made his home a very paradise, his wise father a man of power, and his mother saintly, is a very vulgar thing, and only inculcated by unlettered men and unauthorized teachers. And thus the poor soul excuses himself from the demands of personal exertion and personal fidelity to conscience ; loses himself in the easy externalisms or poetic dreamings which secure him the favor of sentimental pastors, and the smiles of young ladies with pendant crosses on their breasts. It is pitiable, but it is also sad, to think what ineffectiveness of life comes to a young man who, instead of being the dupe of weaklings, might have allied himself with the grandest of Englishmen, and left behind him records of abiding influence.

There is no circle where a man can escape this peril of being unduly swayed by others. Many well-principled young men, who are free from the follies I have glanced at, lose their power to influence through a deplorable lack of force. Instead of quickness, brisk-

ness, strength, in the warehouse, they do their work in a dreamy, sentimental way. Their religious coterie is composed of people who are slow, sedate, and lack vigor. They are taught to think that religion consists in unctuous prayers, sanctimonious looks, effusive utterances, instead of a consistent filling up of duty, care for their employers' interest, and faithful discharge of daily tasks. Oh, do not forget it is the action, it is the life in the very sphere which God has appointed, that is the opportunity for the manifestation of religion. All mere emotion is like the steam from the engine—of no value except as an indication of ability to work.

There is another danger. You will find a class of religious men not at all sentimental, but who will sneer at what they term religious earnestness. A young man's worst enemies are often cold, formal, routine Christians—Christians who think that to stand well with the world, to get into "good society," to be always very respectable, and to have as little cross-bearing as possible, is the golden mean of religious life. Young men, in

the name of all that is true and noble, set yourselves against this style of religious profession. The worst weakness in the world is to fear to do a right thing because others will criticise it.

There were many Christian men in Wittenberg who said to Martin Luther, "You don't mean that you are going to hang up these theses on the church door." "Yes," said Luther; "they are true; they assail damning error; my fatherland is bowing down to antichrist." "Pause," said the men who would stand well with everybody. "Is not this zeal without knowledge? Think how you will scandalize the University; how you will drive off men who would follow you in a more discreet course." "Avaunt!" said the reformer. "The people are perishing in ignorance. The crowds of the common people who come into the city to market will read these words. Yours is not discretion, but cowardice." He did the deed; and as the result of that act, Europe received the Protestant Reformation, and the night of the middle ages was ended.

On one occasion, Nehemiah was urged by his friends to desert the post of duty, to conceal himself in the courts of the Temple, for fear of would-be assassins. With heroic decision, he replied, "Should such a man as I flee? And who is there that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." Brave, perfumed words!

During the mighty struggle for West Indian emancipation, Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton was about to divide the House of Commons; his friends appealed to him not to divide. They came one by one, sat down by his side, urged and implored him not to divide; ministers of the crown besought him to give way. In the whole House there was only one who hoped and prayed that he would be true to the cause of the slave, and that one was his daughter in the gallery. He *was* true to the cause of humanity; and that division, Lord Althorp declared, decided the question of emancipation. The question was next introduced before the House as a Cabinet measure.

There went from Manchester to the British parliament, about twenty-five years ago, a comparatively young man. He went up to London from a conference of ministers of religion who had assembled to secure cheap bread for the people. That conference had been satirized; not a solitary ecclesiastical dignitary had ventured to be present; the leading journal had attempted to cover it with ridicule. That young senator ventured to defend the conference before a crowded House of Commons. His reference was hailed with contemptuous laughter; the greatest statesman of the day rebuked him. Observe! that young man lived to receive an apology from that statesman, to hear him introduce the measure which had been so unpopular, and to receive himself the designation which his name will bear through all coming times, "The Apostle of Free-trade."

I say, where you feel that you are right, be true to yourself; do not take your cue from other men. They may be weak, or prejudiced, or trimmers, or cowards. Why should you lose your individuality for them?

“Oh, blessed is he to whom is given
The instinct that can tell,
That God is on the field when He
Is most invisible.

“And blessed is he who can divine
Where real right doth lie,
And dares to take the side that seems
Wrong to man’s blinded eye.

“Oh, learn to scorn the praise of men ;
Oh, learn to live with God ;
For Jesus won the world through shame,
And beckons thee his road.

“God’s glory is a wondrous thing,
Most strange in all its ways ;
And of all things on earth, least like
What men agree to praise.

For right is right, since God is God ,
And right the day must win ;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin.”

To make full assertion, therefore, of your personal character, let me ask you to bear in mind these counsels :

1. *Do not tamper with convictions.* God in mercy sends you luminous hours. He is the pitying Friend of your soul, and is constantly persuading it to a higher life. I am quite

sure that you cannot pass into manhood without heavenly visitations. Do not, I implore, neglect these visitations. Do not quiet your conscience by a subterfuge. Do not hold the performance of a clear duty in suspense.

Behold a scene of which history tells us. There are two men standing face to face in a Roman court in a maritime city. The one is a young king, his beautiful queen by his side. There is all the pomp and circumstance of station. Chief captains and principal men fill the royal court. Waiting servitors surround the doors, and an eager multitude fill the avenues. The other is an unattended, unbefriended prisoner, with a chain upon his hand. That prisoner tells of a solemn moment when heaven flashed conviction upon his path. He reasons with resistless logic and eloquence in proof of the truth of Christianity. The young king listens—is moved; it is not merely the prisoner that stands face to face with him, but God himself; and his convicted conscience cries out, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!” The as-

sembly breaks up. The king is alone in his chamber, and muses: "I become a Christian—the member of a despised sect! There is clearly truth in what I have heard; but for me to be a Christian, what will the world think of me? My interest and pleasures forbid it." The subject is dismissed, and we have not the faintest intimation that another opportunity of salvation ever again visited that man. He followed his race in the pursuit of ambition and vice; he gradually lost influence and power; his days became troubled and disastrous, and his name remains, like other Herods, unhonored and disgraced. What of that other man—that unbefriended prisoner? He is the foremost man in the world for all after times. One excepted, no name is repeated among men so often as his. *His* life is the life of Christendom in these ages, and will be more and more. He has done more for truth, righteousness, and human salvation, than any other sinful mortal in all ages of the world. What was the secret of this majesty of influence? He told it in that court. When heaven had flashed con-

viction upon his path, he did not allow pleasure nor prejudice nor interest nor public opinion to sway him. These are his words: "*I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.*"

My friend, it has been to many a man a dreadful struggle to repent and turn to God. There have been temptations formidable, and a vacillation of the heart most perilous. But no man can be excused from the conflict. A young man, who became one of the most devoted and constant Christians, was accustomed to insist upon decision, decision, decision, to every young man whom he addressed. Said he, "If you expect God to help you, you must be perfectly *decided*."

2. *Guard against the temptations of the times.* Far be it from me to utter a word that would debar you from the recreations and excitements appropriate to your age. Joy and cheerfulness are your strength and heritage. Monkish austerity and sanctimoniousness are rarely virtues. But our modern civilization has multiplied, under the name of pleasure, the facilities of vice. The perils that assail young men in great cities are so many, so

seductive, and so ruinous to body and soul, as to make an observer tremble. If, then, you would be obedient to the heavenly teaching, you must resolutely resolve not to "go in the way of evil men." There was a time in England when places of business were homes. The employer admitted young men to the domestic sanctities of his family. They received aid from him in the formation of acquaintances, and had even access to his own circles of recreation. Now, young men in cities can scarcely be said to have a home. Some have not even the privilege of a common room, or a fire in their chamber. They are open, therefore, to every allurements that promises pleasure. Places of business, moreover, are huge establishments where the loose moralist can cover vice by self-deceivableness, and where the subtle infidel, the scoffer, and the licentious mingle together. Religion is ridiculed, and the clergy spoken of with a sneer. Filthy books are sold and circulated—books of infamy, which minister to the vilest tastes, which taint and befoul the imagination with unclean images, and which

‘ ‘ ‘
‘ ‘ ‘
‘ ‘ ‘

a man can no more look at without defilement than he can touch soft pitch and be clean.

Alas, wherever a young man turns for worldly amusement he meets danger. Large towns swarm with brilliantly lighted saloons, which hold out their meretricious attractions. There is the drama, music, and art. It was ascertained that in two hours one evening, six hundred young men entered one music hall in London. Were these rooms harmless, he would be an enemy to human happiness who objected to them. If they are demoralizing and ruinous to the health and character of the inexperienced, he is a friend who points this out. It is little suspected how women with bedizened head-dresses and flaunty robes are holding the last shred of their modesty; how married men hide under white waistcoats polluted hearts; how, while "gray hairs dance, devils laugh and angels weep;" how bankrupts wear forced smiles, and the wretched try their poor jokes; how the victims of disease and death hide their ghastliness by flowers, and light their rapid

progress to the grave by flaring gas-light. It is little known how thousands of young men from the religious homes of Scotland and Wales pass into a speedy oblivion after their feet have once crossed the threshold of these rooms in English cities. Alas, what a tale might be told of fathers' hairs whitened, mothers' hearts crushed, sisters' eyes swollen with tears, over sons once the pride of their homes. If you would be pure, then, you must avoid these places. They will speedily prejudice you against religion. They will turn your doubts into blank unbelief and atheism. They will quench in you even the desire for immortality. They will turn into terror or scoffing every restraining influence. And what help can there then be for you for this world or for the next?

3. *Have faith in the significance of your life.* There is no exaggeration when a living writer says: "If there were the smallest star in heaven that had no place to fill, the oversight would beget a disturbance which no Leverrier could compute. One grain of sand, that did not fall into its place, would disturb, or

even fatally disorder the whole scheme of the heavenly motions. Every particle of air has its appointed place, and serves its appointed end." God, dear young man, means something by you. Yours may not be the highest, but there is some high work which you may fulfil. The low grass-tuft is not the branching cedar towering for centuries on Lebanon; nor is it the fragrant orange-blossom, which is plucked to deck the bridal wreath; but neither the orange-blossom nor cedar could render the service of that lowly grass-tuft. In sacred converse with your Maker, breathe the prayer, in this the formative period of your existence: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Why have I an existence among these living souls of this creation? Why hast thou given me these grand and awful endowments of thought, reason, intelligence, speech? I look round on the universe, and see all creatures fulfilling their appointed service. I see the sun filling the whole hemisphere from day to day with his light and heat. I see at night the stars lighting up the arch of the firmament,

each keeping his appointed place, the silent preacher of obedience to thy will. I see the bird that balances its pinions on the air, testifying of thy goodness. I learn that the tiny invisible insect is answering its purpose in preserving the salubrity of the atmosphere and the purity of the water. I find every fragrant violet of the hedgerow and every shock of corn fulfilling a mission of serving. I learn from thy word of the higher spirits that dwell in thy presence, that they have their appointed work; that angels are ministering spirits, and do thy commandments, hearkening to the voice of thy word; and as I thus behold a universe where each has its appointed place, I utter the prayer more earnestly, What is the meaning of my life, Father of spirits? I share thy counsels; reveal thy thought respecting me." Deeply am I convinced, my brother, that if with some such prayer you enter upon this period of your life, your existence will prove no meaningless thing; it will be instinct with influence, and will have an end to which you will come with unutterable rapture,

I have in the foregoing considerations helped to answer the question how you may assert the power of your personal character. I by no means say that you should disparage associations. The most useless men are those who will never combine. Exaggerated individuality makes a man impracticable, and sometimes insupportable. On the other hand, our modern danger lies in another direction. It is so to shape ourselves by others as to destroy force and effectiveness.

Gibbon tells us a tragic history, which has been more amply narrated by Count Montalembert in his "Monks of the West." The gladiatorial games of Rome were continued until the beginning of the sixth century of our era. They had turned a civilized people into savage cannibals. There, in that enormous amphitheatre, whose tiers rising above tiers remain to this day, tens of thousands of spectators looked down on the bloody spectacle, and thousands of victims were slaughtered. A holy man in the East heard of the deeds of blood. The fire of a righteous indignation seized him. He travelled to Rome;

arrived there as the imperial games were being celebrated. His soul burned against the cruelty and the impiety. He entered the Colosseum; burst through the waves of the people all palpitating with ferocious curiosity. He threw himself between the gladiators engaged in the sanguinary combat. In the name of the God of heaven he commanded them to cease their murderous strife. The pagan multitude were for a moment panic-stricken with the holy audacity of the Christian. Then they cried out; they rose on him; they tore up the arches; stones hissed around him; the gladiators completed the work of death. But the blood of the martyr was the last shed in that arena. The horrid custom, which had so long resisted the voice of humanity, ended with that testimony. The nobleness of the sacrifice showed the horror of the abuse. The emperor Honorius proscribed the games of the gladiators, and they have never been revived.

Without any such sacrifice you may learn from it the might of a simple act of decision for truth and conscience, and that by such

noble deeds your life may have immortal issues. Where the timid will start back in fear, there you may bless the coming ages. The achievements of duty have been grander than those of the warrior. Wordsworth says of duty :

“Flowers laugh before her in their beds,
And fragrance in her footsteps treads :
She does preserve the stars from wrong,
And the eternal heavens through her are fresh and
strong.”

At the beginning of manhood you stand now ; a few years, and you will stand at the end. The span is brief ; the earthly life is only one. These lines are written for your sake alone. No interest can another have in your living a noble life that is comparable to the interest you have in yourself. If you find at the end of life that you have made a grand mistake, it will be a mistake you never can undo. Soon the shadows will flee, and men will be judged, not by the earthly standard, but by what they have been and have done. Sometimes when bales of merchandise leave England for a colonial port, the price put

upon them there is very different from that they had here. So when you have gone through the gates of death, the angels will not ask how you stood with this world; but they will estimate you by your fidelity, your sympathies, the consecration of your life to that which was true and good. Alone you will go into that eternity, as alone you came into existence. Alone will you tread the path to the throne of God; alone you will be judged; alone will your opportunities come up in review; alone will you carry through eternity the results of the one earthly life you have lived. Said a noble youth, who lived long enough to fulfil high promise: "I shall die as an individual; I shall be judged as an individual: I am resolved, therefore, to live as an individual." It is just this purpose to which, in God's name, I summon you in this address. Let it be so, my brother. Take thy place with the illustrious ones of all times who have lived to bless the world. Pass on to manhood and to immortality with the seal of God upon thy brow. And then, when death has done its mission, disen-

thralled of flesh, thou shalt rise to the unobstructed sphere where hinderance never comes, and where thou shalt begin an illimitable work. There, with thy life grafted upon the infinite, it will be fruitful as no earthly life can be.

GRANDEUR OF DESTINY:

HOW YOU MAY REACH IT.



GRANDEUR OF DESTINY:

HOW YOU MAY REACH IT.

THE belief in the doctrine of growth is of infinite moment to a young man. The difference between one man and another lies here. Find a young man who does not believe in the doctrine of moral growth, or is indifferent to it, and you may safely affirm that WASTE or PERDITION is being invisibly inscribed upon his forehead. On the other hand, let a young man be thoroughly persuaded of the possibility of the highest moral and spiritual progress, and he not only has hold of a truth that is saving, but if faithful, he will reach a majesty of character, a force, and a beauty of spirit of which no mortal can conceive. Let me illustrate the subject of this address. You look at a seed-corn when lodged in the earth.

Growth is its law. After the first discipline of wintry frosts, it uplifts its stalk beneath the warm breath of the south; then unwraps from its careful green foldings its delicate ear, and lifts it up for the golden sun to ripen it. Arrived at perfection, it offers itself to man for higher uses, and becomes part of his strength. Or, again, the acorn having found its place in the favorable soil, puts out feelers, and sends them into the earth for more moisture. Modestly it breaks through the ground to take its place among its compeers of the forest; drinks in the air, rains, and dew of heaven; extends its little branches, twigs, and leaflets, that its receiving-power may be greater. Growth, unceasing, is its law. Its beauty is the charm of the woods in May; its topmost leaves quiver in the breeze of summer; its strong arms beat back the storms of autumn; and for generations and centuries it grows in its magnificent completeness.

And who shall limit the growth of a young man? How true of him, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Like the youth who climbed mountain-heights with "the

banner of strange device," so he may ever see "*not yet*" shining like a star on the brow of the future. The youth, the trusting Christian, the devoted worker, the mature saint are but the lowest steps of his ever-ascending destiny.

One of the grandest mornings of my life was, when I reached the pass of St. Gothard across the Alps. Having ascended above the sultry airs of an early Italian summer, and slept three thousand feet above the sea-level, I rose at four in the morning, and begged the privilege of sitting on the roof of the diligence by the side of the conductor. How invigorating was the fresh mountain-air of the morning, like the first love of a young heart to Christ. But as the road toiled upward, more and more ravishing was the joy. The mountain-pines now began to open vistas of wondrous beauty; the graceful tops of the larches waved in their uninvaded home; the granite rocks, with a thousand precipitous forms, stood like sentinels to nature's most majestic domains; the Ticino poured down to the sultry plains below its rushing sound

of waters. There behind was the river, gliding on like a silver thread of light; and there before were glimpses of giant peaks, with the light burnishing the peerless white of their eternal snows. But for nine rapturous hours we went higher; and as we ascended, fresher grew the air, more beautiful the leaping waterfalls, more sublime the pass through galleries of rocky labyrinths, more thrilling the transition from gloomy defiles to spots of pastoral loveliness, and more exciting the emotion as we stood at length about nine thousand feet above the valley below, amid the sinless silence of the everlasting hills.

In a loftier sense than this, higher and ever higher may be a Christian young man's progress. Follow him. He is active and devoted in all that blesses man; he rises in harmony of character and effectiveness of influence; he comes to have a name in the community of men, and is a man of mark among his fellows; to those coming on the stage of life he becomes the pattern-man; and those who once sneered at his decision and aspirations

would now be glad to catch the skirts of his garments. "Not yet," he may say, "have I reached the stature of growth." Fruits of goodness ripen in his life; wider is the sphere he fills; he is yet more loved, trusted, and honored; till at length he sees the gate and the glory of the city he is going to; above the sounds of conflict he breathes supernal air, and listens as there reach him from afar the sounds of heavenly music. And when the golden gates have been thrown back to give him entrance, and the angels have welcomed him, and the great and good of other times have clasped hands with him, even then growth in power and blissfulness shall be the law of his being. He will rise to be a companion of the mighty spirits of the universe. Higher, stronger, wiser, freer, mightier, more capable of knowing, blessing, enjoying will be his glorious and eternal career.

I am dealing in no figures of speech. This is the grandeur of man's destiny. This is the true law of life; and none the less true that so many miserably fall short of it.

And now, young man, I speak to you who

are just starting on a career that may be thus sublime; and to you I say there is a *divine secret* of this eternal growth. That secret is in one word—*receiving*. Look again at nature. The flowers grow by receiving. Place them where they can receive neither sunlight nor moisture, and they will droop and die. As the sun arises by morning in the heavens, they turn to him their expanded bosoms, that his warm beams may fall there. They spread out leaves to take in more rain; they fold themselves in restful quiet at night, that dew-drops may settle on their buds and stems. After this manner man grows. Among the sentences of Scripture there are two which deserve to be written on the walls of a young man's chamber in letters of gold: "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven." "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above."

I do not mean to affirm that you are to be passive. Go again to nature to learn her parable. The plant grows by receiving; but it is not, like rocks and stones, dull and inert; it

avails itself of its advantages for growth. It coöperates in working out its perfection. It opens its ducts; it builds upon itself new lengths of wood; it is faithful to its gifts, and makes every new attainment a plea for larger blessings.

Dear young man, study *your* nature. In the truly-developed man there are three powers—body, soul, spirit. This three-fold distinction which is made in the Bible, remarkable to say, is also that of the latest and maturest philosophy. The *body* grows up from childhood by receiving; and even in mature strength it builds up a ceaseless waste by the same process. The *soul* or *intellect* grows by receiving. It receives information; allows itself to be cultured; avails itself of the stores which other times have acquired. It never creates. What seems so is only reaching the full meaning or placing in new combinations what it has received. There is, however, a *spirit* in man. To this I turn your thoughts. Deep in your nature is the grandest of all your endowments. There, unthought of, it may be, is that divine faculty which sepa-

rates you from the brutes and allies you to the seraphim. There, smouldering in darkness or selfishness, is a spirit which nothing earthly can satisfy; which sends forth aspirations after God; which hungers after the good; which protests against that filth of animal indulgence under which it is often buried; but which, on the other hand, can be moved, and grow, and expand, and become the dominant principle, and bring all evil into subjection to itself, and become elevated in wisdom and ascendancy, till, shaking off every encumbrance of corruption, its powers are free, glorious, and triumphant.

Let me quote to you a sentence from one of the profound religious thinkers of our age: "The religious talents compose the whole Godward side of faculty in us. There is the talent of being illuminated, permeated, guided, exalted by the Spirit of God. There is also the talent or capacity of religious love. Man can appropriate the love of God, which can pour itself in as a tide with mighty floods of joy and power. There is also the power of faith, which can fall on God in recumbent

trust, and appropriate him in all his personality of goodness and love. These talents are the highest, noblest, closest to divinity of all the powers we have."

Most of the visitors to the Exhibition of Industry of 1862 saw that costliest of all diamonds, the Kohincor. There was a time when that priceless gem gave not out a ray of brilliancy. Deep in the darkness it lay; no light shone on it; no light came back from it. But it was placed in the light; its opaque substance was opened. Its power of receiving had freedom. It now allowed the minutest ray unimpeded passage through its mass. And then how marvellous the transformation. It shone and glittered and shot back light like the most brilliant star.

By these analogies have I sought to reveal to you the nature of that spiritual growth to which you are summoned. Hearken, I implore you, to the cry of your own immortal spirit. Open your nature, that you may receive the quickening life of the Almighty. You hear at this time much about religious cant and hypocrisy. It seems as if even the

better class of novelists of our period could never expound their own moral principles without a contemptuous sneer at the religious phraseology or life of their fellow-Christians. But let me tell you, the cant which is the most irrational, and the hypocrisy which is the most insane, is that which deems it manly to live without communion with God. Ashamed to be in communion with heaven! Ashamed to be inspired by your Creator! What madness would be this—if the sapphire should be ashamed of the light that makes its beauty; if the quivering beech-leaves should be ashamed of the sunbeams that dance on their smooth surface; if the flowers should be ashamed of the daybreak that reveals their hues; if fields, hills, and the whole realm of nature should be ashamed of the precious influences which the heavens pour down upon them. But for you, a child of God, to be ashamed of receiving illumination and impulse, wisdom and elevation, from the Father of your spirit, is the most pitiable misjudgment of which any creature can be capable. Talk of religious cant—

there is no cant that is so hateful, because there is no cant that is so unreflecting and senseless, as that which sneers at man having fellowship with his Maker. It is God, my brother, who gives to every star its brightness, to every cloud its nameless colors, to every lily its snowy whiteness, to every tiny ocean-shell its mingled hues. Oh, then, go to him. Ask him to condescend to bless you with his indwelling life, to give power to the right thing in your nature, to irradiate you with his light, to actuate you by his love, and to be an impulse of perfection within you. As you open your nature to receive God, the spirit within you will spring forward; it will respond swiftly to the touch of its original Source; it will rise in protest against the weaknesses and passions that have choked and smothered it. Blessed with the movements of God, it will glow, develop, acquire ascendance; it will bring all your nature into harmony and peace; it will be an impulse to all that is "lovely and of good report."

But observe this, my friend—if you will

hearken to your carnal inclination ; if you will give heed to the drivelling folly of fools ; if you will not receive Christ ; if you will have none of his counsels, none of his institutions ; if you will choose none of his ways—then in you there never can grow up a spirit trained for perfect bliss. Men object to hell. What is hell, but to be outside the loyalty and love of heaven ? It is an infinite right due to the universe to keep out of heaven a spirit that has rejected the aid that would have made it fit for heaven. It may be a mercy to keep a soul, all of whose tastes are carnal and earthly, out of heaven, as it is a mercy to take a creeping worm out of uncongenial sunlight, and place it in darkness. If you have allowed idiots to teach you that it is manly to sneer at prayer to God, what right have you to complain if you remain unblessed by God ? If you deliberately choose darkness instead of light, what wrong is done you if you are left in the “outer darkness,” whatever that may be ? If a flowering plant should say, “I will not have what heaven’s influences can do for me,” it would be righteously excluded,

in its hideous deformity, from the monarch's banqueting-hall. Ah, that plant *must* be obedient. But you, akin to the angels, have the awful liberty of disobedience. If you choose not Christ, it will be because you harden your heart against him ; because you close your nature to the heavenly drawings that would bless you. There is a passage of Scripture of fathomless significance. The gracious gifts of God to the spirit of man are said to be to eternal life, but "sin" is said to "*reign unto death.*" Yes, the principle of sin in the nature, if yielded to, if not overcome by God's Spirit, quenches the innocence of infancy and the purity of youth ; corrupts the imagination, defiles the affections, inflames the passions, hardens the feelings, degrades soul and spirit to be slaves to the flesh, deadens religious capacity, extinguishes holy susceptibility, darkens the understanding to the things of God, makes gross the heart, dulls the hearing, murders the angel in a man, and kills every heaven-directed aspiration ; and then—and then—what remains for such a spirit but to abide in death, and be left to

wander for ever in the unknown realms of disloyalty and everlasting darkness?

On starting in life, then, I would charge and beseech you to rise to the true elevation of your nature. Among men there are *five classes*. The *lowest* class are the slaves of fleshly appetites. These are the sensual, the debauched, the lascivious, the drunken. The *second* class obey the world, and judge after the worldly standard. These are the lovers of pleasure, lovers of style, lovers of money, lovers of power. The *third* class are the intellectual. Wisely they culture intellect, but they neglect the heart. They acquire information, but not benevolent emotions. They investigate nature, but do not see the glories of nature's God. Higher still, there is the *fourth* class—the moral. They are the soul of honor; they love liberty; they teach political principles; they profess to comprehend the duties that man owes to his neighbor. The summit, however, of greatness, is when, with attention to intellect and moral laws, there is the development of the capacity of religion. It is here humanity culminates—

the development of the spirit in man. These of the *highest* class are lighted up from within by the Spirit of God. By the inbreathing of the Almighty, they have understanding of things unseen ; they do not despise intellect, but intellect in them is warmed and vivified by a divine brightness ; they honor morality, and seek a right standard for measuring its duties ; they fall into the movements of the Perfect Mind and the Perfect Love ; they learn to renounce self, to control the fleshly ; they acquire a disposition that can forgive ; they are prompted to do good, and are enlarged with beneficence ; they have aptitude for spiritual enjoyments, and receive constantly new accessions of joy and power, whereby they become fitted for those blissful regions where love, purity, nobleness, peace, and benignity have place for ever.

Young man, just beginning your immortal existence, behold your true destiny. Oh, for God's sake and your own sake, do not fall short of it ! Here is the culminating point of humanity. Do not be degraded, and live unworthy of yourself. This is the end of

Christ's gospel: not merely to save, as a man is saved from fire or from drowning—just brought out of the water or the flames alive; but to save by conducting a human spirit to the victory over sin, self, and the world. "I am come," said the Saviour, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

This elevation to which I call you is not in opposition to other attainments—it embraces them. Piety will not give the intellectual talent which nature has withheld; but, if true, it will vastly improve whatever intellect a man has. It will not supply high reasoning powers if they were not there before; but it will save reason from that blindness of conceit and prejudice whereby so many are fatally hindered and misled. With piety, a man's intellect will be keener, his understanding will be sounder, his judgment will be wiser, and his tastes improved and refined. Richard Cobden is represented as having declared that he never felt confidence in a man who was not possessed by religion; he was not at all sure what action he would take. Myriads

of facts confirm the observation of the statesman. Of two poets, otherwise equal, the Christian is the greater; of two statesmen, the Christian attains the more permanent fame; of two artists equally gifted, the Christian takes the higher place; of two merchants equally practical and far-seeing, the Christian reaches the surest success. There were Arabian sheiks as magnanimous as Abraham; but none acquired his ascendancy over all times and nations. There were in Egypt many learned men besides Joseph; but none so influential. There were many great kings of the East besides David; but none reached his elevation. There were many wise men in Babylon besides Daniel; but none so illustrious. There were in his age many scholars like Paul; but none who so powerfully affected humanity. There were many Saxon kings who loved their country like Alfred; but none so great. There were in his times many who loved liberty like Milton; but none whose writings are more read in these. There have been many investigators of nature like Sir Isaac Newton; but none so

distinguished. There have been many soldiers who have won splendid honors like Washington; but none whose name is such a spell of might to a great nation as is his. There were many great statesmen in England when this century commenced; but none who died so popular and so honored as Wilberforce. There have been many princes who have been cultured and benevolent; but none whose name "hereafter and for all times" will be such "a household word" as that of Albert the Good. *These were all men of sincere piety.* Ah, I might tell out a record of names that would have towered to the loftiest heights; but around which there are sad and awful memories through the absence of a governing and master sentiment of the soul. No prejudice is so contradicted by facts as that which conceives of piety as allied with weakness. Piety is the nurse, the handmaid, the inspirer of all that can give man greatness. "A man's religion," says Dr. Huntingdon very finely, "fertilizes the whole field of his being. It makes his business safer, his scholarship wiser, his manhood manlier, his

joy healthier, his strength stronger. It is the crown of his enterprise and the charm of his affections, the humility of his learning, and the glory of his life. And because it has sight of things not seen and eternal, it is the splendor, the transfiguration, and the sanctity of things seen and temporal."

Observe, however, it is not greatness to which I would urge you. There is the *attractiveness* of piety, which, in the humblest sphere you can exemplify. Oh, the beauty and power of a man who has tranquillized passion, has subdued the lower appetites, has acquired gentleness and considerateness, amenity and affectionateness; and who, reposing in the love of Christ, and taught by the Spirit of Christ, is having formed in his life some transcript of the superhuman loveliness which dwelt in Christ himself.

This, then, is the point to which I come. If you would have your nature to reach the highest place of which it is capable, yield yourself to God. You cannot create the good in yourself. You can no more form yourself to the divine and heavenly than the rosebud

can open its beauties without sunlight or atmospheric moisture. It is your happiness to receive. It is your privilege to open your nature that you may receive. The holy and all-helpful Spirit will swiftly draw near at the voice of your sincere cry to him. Myriads have proved this on earth : a multitude which no man can number affirm it in heaven.

It was once my privilege to know one—the Rev. Jonathan Glyde of Bradford—in whom the combination of excellencies I have sketched was exemplified. His had been for many years the reach after this moral and spiritual perfection ; and he attained, as many admirably witnessed, his own ideal of gentleness and dignity, consideration for others and abnegation of self, beautiful humility and scholarly attainment, saintly purity and unfailing charity, childlike reliance upon the Saviour, and unwearied zeal for his fellow-men. When he was dying he was heard gently to murmur, “Higher, higher!” His attendants, misconceiving his meaning, approached the head of his bed to raise the pillows. Seeing their mistake, he fell back

upon the Latin word, and with an ineffable smile, raised his enfeebled hand, saying, "Excelsior, excelsior!" To his waiting spirit the glimpse was given at that moment of the career of immortal glory, growth, and blessedness which was then before him.

And now, in view of what has been said, let me add these counsels.

1. *Religion is the necessity of your existence.* If, like Cain, you had stood at the beginning of the race, there might have been some excuse for you in attempting to find happiness without God; but you stand with the open book of six thousand years behind you. There has not been a solitary case of a nation, or individual, who resolved to find permanent happiness in sensual things, who has not been disappointed. Read history: you will see how the experiment has been tried again and again, and has always failed. Babylon tried it, with every advantage of Oriental luxury and splendor, and failed. Greece tried it, with every advantage of art and literature, and still the wisest men busied themselves to find the lost treasure of human hap-

piness. Rome tried it, with every advantage of wealth and spectacle, and the more we pierce to the heart of society in Rome's proudest days, the more do we find despair preying there. England tried it in the days of the second Charles. Puritanism had been silenced; godliness was satirized on the stage; lust was the commodity of poets and wits; license was the fashion; but the unrest and craving of society grew deeper, louder, and more troubled, as rivalries, intrigues, and licentiousness abounded.

It has been the same with individuals. You have been told of the gay Lord Chesterfield recording at the close of an enviable life of fashion and pleasure, "I am now wise enough to feel and attest the force of Solomon's reflections, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Mr. Lewes tells us in his life of Goethe, that the great poet wrote at thirty years of age: "The period in which I have mingled with the world I dare not yet trust myself to look at. God keep me, that I be not as those who spend the day in complaining of headache, and the night in drinking

the wine which gives the headache." In advanced age the celebrated skeptic said of himself, "They have called me a child of fortune, nor have I any wish to complain of the course of my life; yet it has been nothing but labor and sorrow, and I may truly say that in seventy-five years I have not had four weeks of true comfort. It was the constant rolling of a stone that was always to be lifted anew." To me, as a Christian, such a testimony is inexpressibly affecting. In the seventh volume of "Gibbon's History" you will find a description of the founder of the city, palace, and gardens of Zehra, three miles from Cordova. Three millions sterling were spent. Sculptors and architects were invited from Constantinople. Nothing that the world could render to minister to the tastes and passions of the caliph was wanting. After his death this authentic memorial was found in his cabinet: "I have now reigned above fifty years in victory or peace; beloved by my subjects, dreaded by my enemies, and respected by my allies. Riches, honors, power, and pleasure have waited on

my call, nor does any earthly blessing appear to have been wanting to my felicity. In this situation I have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot: they amount to FOURTEEN! O man, place not thy confidence in this present world."

In mentioning these things, I have no desire to detract from the real happiness there is in human life. There are a thousand sources of enjoyment that are open to you. Life is joyous—it has its endless gratifications; but I solemnly tell you that you will be utterly disappointed if you seek happiness apart from personal goodness and from God. Why should you ignore the testimony of all times? Why should you not avail yourself of this universal experience? Why should you, by the wreck of your own comfort, add your life to be another beacon of warning? No doubt sin has its fascination; but if men whose opportunities were greater than your own tell you that at "the end it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder," is it not consummate folly for you to shut your ears to the

testimony? You are too good for the world ; “you are of too noble a make and too lofty a mien” to give yourself to any thing lower than God. There was a young man starting in life, as you are. He had not your advantages. He was surrounded by the licentiousness of a corrupt paganism. He went wildly astray into vicious indulgence. Little more than thirty years had gone over his head when he turned aside from the gratifications of passion, and then he poured out his soul in “confessions” which have come down to us, and which tell us in eloquent, pathetic tones that man is doomed to an unsatisfied craving till he turns to know, to love, and to serve God. You may be able to read these noble Latin words which have been well quoted by a university preacher from the great Augustine’s first confession : “*Fecisti nos ad Te, Domine, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in Te.*”

2. *Take heed of the first wrong step.* In the Life of the late Mr. Baines, Member of Parliament for Leeds, it is recorded that one day he was watching an apprentice, whose habits

were doubtful, fold a newspaper. At the first fold there was a wrinkle, and at every succeeding fold the wrinkle grew worse and more unmanageable. Mr. Baines said significantly, 'Jem, it is a bad thing to begin wrong.' The poor fellow found it so, for he soon after fell a victim to his vices. "Who ever was content with one sin?" said a heathen moralist. There are, indeed, young men who, in an unguarded moment, have gone into scenes of temptation, and have turned away with horror and recoil, like a bird that, having strayed into the poisonous atmosphere of chemical works, has rushed back quickly to the pure air of heaven. But such cases are the exceptions. There is a witchery about sin. One lie demands a second to back it; and thus a man becomes that most contemptible and hopeless of men, a confirmed liar. A great preacher, the late Dr. Winter Hamilton, once said that he had known men of all other kinds of wickedness converted; but a confirmed liar he had never known converted. One night in a music and dancing saloon may so pollute the imagination as to break

down the barriers of years. One throw at a gaming-table, one bet on a race, may so excite the craving for this perilous speculation that it may be followed by the frenzy and suffering of years of gambling. One indulgence of the lusts of the flesh may so damn a man in his own eyes that in a year he may be utterly foul. Dear young man, nothing deadens the conscience so much as sin ; nothing creates a desire for repetition so much as sin ; nothing so rises in its demands from every concession made to it so much as sin. Among the most striking things in our language is a sentence of Jeremy Taylor on the progress of sin : " Sin startles a man—that is, the first step ; then it becomes pleasing ; then it becomes easy ; then delightful, then frequent ; then habitual, then confirmed ; then the man is impenitent, then obstinate ; then resolves never to repent, and then is damned." My young brother, it is in mercy that our heavenly Father sweeps away all the trifling with sin by those strong but loving words, " Thou shalt *not*." Our poor self rises ; passion raises its tempest of desire ; experts in vice solicit ;

the wrong waits to claim us and hold dominion over us, and our good God, who sees the end, says, "Go not in the way of evil men; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." It is just now, when boyhood is over, that you are to gain the victory. Harken to that true man within you. Listen to that protest of God's Spirit in your soul. Resolve to obey and conquer, and the victory will make you stronger, and make temptation weaker. No one, however, can win the victory for you. The test to prove whether you will be ignoble or noble, is for you to grapple with. With the first temptation, then, contend; for it may be a fight for life or death.

I know there is a maxim very common that "a young fellow must sow his wild oats." They shall not be my words that reply to that saying. They shall be those of a man who knows the world, and an ardent lover of the pure pleasures of the world. "In all the range of accepted British maxims," says Mr. Thomas Hughes, M. P., "there is none, take it all in all, more thoroughly abominable than this one as to the sowing of wild oats. Look

at it on which side you will, and I will defy you to make any thing but a devil's maxim of it. What a man, be he young, old, or middle-aged, sows, *that*, and nothing else, shall he reap. The one only thing to do with wild oats, is to put them carefully into the hottest part of the fire, and get them burnt to dust, every seed of them. If you sow them, no matter in what ground, up they will come, with long tough roots like couch-grass, and luxuriant stalks and leaves, as sure as there is a sun in heaven—a crop which it turns one's heart cold to think of. The devil, too, whose special crop they are, will see that they thrive, and you, and nobody else, will have to reap them; and no common reaping will get them out of the soul, which must be dug down deep again and again. Well for you if with all your care you can make the ground sweet again by your dying day. 'Boys will be boys' is not much better, but that has a true side to it; but this encouragement to the sowing of wild oats is simply devilish, for it means that a young man is to give way to the temptations and follow the lusts of his age."

As I am in these addresses to picture life as it is, and to let facts speak, I will still add corroborative instances that have fallen under my own observation. I feel sure that hundreds of young men would have shunned vice if facts had been told them of its issues. They have few to tell them. It is intensely disagreeable to tell them. But I cannot see young men coming into our great cities without forewarning them of the rocks ahead of them. While these sheets were passing through the press, I had a most painful illustration of the ruin and sorrow following upon the indulgence of sin. A young man came to London, bearing with him the confidence and affection of a godly and afflicted mother, the pride of a Christian father, and the yearning love of pure and beautiful sisters. Because of his intelligence and probity, he was placed in a situation of trust, and went on well while the thought of home and its sanctities was with him. The tempter tried her arts, and caught him in her wiles. The expenses of the dancing-room and the habits it led to were beyond his limit of wealth. He

took from intrusted money; the embezzlement was not at first discovered. He grew confident. Satan wrapped blinding folds around him. Alas, the success was brief. From a gloomy prison he sent up a message to ask my prayers for him. I do not know him. None will know him through this reference. At twenty-one he has brought a dark shadow over his life-dawn. Deep as is the darkness, it may be God's only means of answering his mother's prayers. Alas, for five years of his imprisonment has that mother's heart to be riven!

When I was a minister in Leeds, a fine youth came to that town. He was a native of a far-off land. He came to acquire mechanical knowledge more perfectly prior to becoming head of a great house. Wealth and possessions were before him. An attached family circle delighted in him. He was amiable, fascinating, and naturally generous. A group of wild young men determined to allure him to pleasure and sin. He fell into the snare. The billiard-room was visited; it led to the tavern, and then to the

brothel. His kind employer remonstrated with him and pointed out the consequences of his courses. It was of no avail. He had consulted the "secret physician," or, rather, quack. A severe cold brought to a climax his virulent disorder. His magnificent form was tossed upon a bed of anguish. Loved ones hastened over the sea to seek to save him. It could not be. So loathsome was his chamber that nurses could hardly be secured to attend him, and those most loving him rushed overpowered from his bedside. His pearly teeth all dropped out, and at length, decayed and agonized, he died a dreadful, hopeless death.

3. *Be courageous.* I have spoken of the perils of great cities. I might speak of their grand opportunities. They are the schools for the highest education of which man is capable. They have their thousand instrumentalities for noble development. They have their incitements to the most pleasurable excitation. They bring a collision of mind largely beneficial. They open channels for benevolence and greatness as no

other places do. But my advice is, let no man come to a great city without courage. If he is weak, yielding, cowardly, let him not venture upon the encounters of a city life. Let a youth aim to live a godly life, and the sluggish will sneer, the empty-souled will laugh, the wicked will throw out sarcasms. Woe to the man who cannot brave the laugh of fools. My friend, it is the first step that costs. My observation leads me to say that fast and depraved men, with all their brag, are the greatest cowards. They like to make conquest of the inexperienced, but their forced laugh very poorly covers the secret awe they have of the manly and the firm. They know what is the right thing to do, spite of their sarcasms. Do I say, Trust in yourself? By no means; if you wish to be brave, God will provide you armor. If, on the other hand, you go into the world saying, "I am not of the sort that yield; I am afraid of no danger," then let me say there is fear for this self-confidence. It is a proverb we need to repeat to ourselves: "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit, there is

more hope of a fool than of him." But be sure, my young brother, God is interested in your going the right way. He loves to help those who call upon him. I think of David as a young man crying to his pious mother's God: "Save the son of thy handmaid." Morning by morning ask God to arm you from head to foot, and then be strong and courageous.

4. Having decided on the right course, *go forward*. That right course is before you. No past guilt of yours is a barrier. "Christ has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." There is an open pathway of reconciliation on which you may walk. But oh, for God's sake and your own sake, when you have found that path, do not stand still. I have known young men who started well: their standard was high; their ideal of what Christianity demanded was just and lofty. They resolved they would scorn the mean, the money-loving, the selfish in life. They wound their conscience up to that point. But there the finger stopped, just at that figure: it told out still what their ideal had been at start-

ing. And this was all; the clock did not go. They now have no sound, no tone about them. They still say they scorn the mean, without aiming to *do* noble things; they still tell you they hate avarice, but they are not benevolent; they have their theories about selfish Christians, but none bless them for their self-renouncing deeds. This is of all things the most pitiable, that a man should sink lower than his own standard, and go through life false to himself.

“To thine own self be true;
And it must follow, as the night to day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.”

I surely need not say, Turn not back. Should the eagle which has soared higher than his compeers break his pinion, he would drop lower than the lowest. It is related that in the American War of Independence, the army of Washington had crossed a bridge over a deep river. With the river behind and the enemy in front, the great general proposed the question to his officers: “Shall we burn the bridge?” “Burn it!” said the staff; “we may want it for a retreat.” “Retreat!” said

Washington; "if that is the only reason for retaining it, then it must perish." "Burn the bridge!" was his instant order; and it was laid in ashes.

5. *Cultivate helps to the spiritual life.* That life cannot take care of itself. It sprung forth first to meet the touch of God's Spirit, and it can only grow and become strong by communion with the Spirit. You see some who appeared to be religious youths at fourteen, and who are worldly at twenty. No doubt there were fine religious susceptibilities which were quickened into activity at the former period, and which gave them vantage ground for a fine start; but they lived on themselves, which is the same as feeding the body upon emptiness. No wonder their apparent religious life should have died. It is very much to be deplored, that with the facilities which are afforded to many through early closing movements, the opportunities for social religious culture should be passed by. Remember the secret of growth I have indicated—coöperation with God. When a man has saplings in his orchard which bear

only wild fruit, like a good orchardist he seeks to improve them by grafting. He cuts his grafts from a last year's growth of wood; takes care that they do not evaporate their moisture; then on the stocks grafts his scions. If a sapling is unbenefited; if the wood above the graft is just like the wood below, which it ought not to be; or if the fruit be of a mongrel kind, partly of the original stock and partly of the scion, what will he do? Try again, it may be. But if, after repeated trials, he has the same result, he will reject his unprofitable stocks, and turn his attention to fresh young trees. This is Christ's law of spiritual life. That which beareth not fruit receiveth no more attention from the husbandman. When a young man has much given to him—religious training, divine movements on his soul, glimpses of the beauty and blessedness of a religious life—if then there is a self-confidence, badness of heart, levity with Scripture, negligence in prayer, trifling with holy things, indifference to growth, then Christ suspends the vital influences. The branch remains, but it is sapless, lifeless, joy-

less. If the little life is in thy heart, my brother, let me implore thee to seek its growth by prayer, by public and social worship, by seeking acquaintance with the mind of the Spirit in holy Scripture. The *Times* newspaper—and the testimony of a secular journal may have weight on this matter—said not long ago in a leader: “We question if any person of any class ever read the Scriptures regularly and thoroughly without being or becoming not only religious, but sensible and consistent.”

6. *Ally yourself with the like-minded.* You will take your character from your chosen companions. You may not mean it, but you cannot help it. “He that walketh with wise men will be wise,” saith the proverb, and the reverse side is true also. As a religious young man you cannot stand alone. Associate yourself with the aspiring. Seek the sympathy and helpfulness of a Christian church. You will not do this because you are strong, but because you feel weak. You will go into a church not because you are wise and holy, but because you need pray-

ers, and the impulse of mutual fellowship. There is a most unreasoning prejudice in this age against church communion. "Do not be a sectary," you will be told. You may reply: "There never has been an age in England when the very best, holiest, and most useful men were not counted sectaries." The grandest works which have gone to save and bless the world have been done by Christian denominations; the noblest of men have been in firm alliance with some Christian church. The outsiders have mostly been the critics, the sentimental, and the ineffective. As a young man, a Christian organization offers a grand scene for your labors and for your dignified influence.

It may be you feel you cannot take your place among the righteous. Let me then conjure you not to let a day pass without resolving that you will give yourself in loyalty through Christ unto God. He is calling you through these words to glory and virtue. He strives with you to win your love. His garments have been dyed in blood for your salvation. He bows himself to you and

deigns to knock at the door of your heart. Oh, for the sake of what is holiest, dearest, infinite, do not resist his pleadings. On this the starting-point of your manhood, you are in your own power. God appeals to you and says: "I set before you life and death." The end of life now seems far off. Believe me it will come sooner far than you think. Ceaselessly, noiselessly, swiftly will life pass. Your life must be looked back upon. If, after your opportunities, it is proved to have been a life of waste and evil influence; heavier will be your remorse and doom. May God in mercy grant that yours may be the place among the consecrated ones who have blessed humanity, and who now know the meaning and grandeur of a destiny that called them to glory and immortality.

Thus do I lay these counsels before you, my friend, as you enter upon life. They have been written amid the demands of a large charge and the wearying claims of public life. They might have been better. But they are the outpouring of an intensely anxious heart. Looking back upon the past,

I feel, with thousands more, that the great boon of existence was the disposition to ally my nature with Christ's when eighteen years of age. From that time with what inexpressible benignity, patience, and sympathy, has Christ helped me! And now, should I be called to no other service, in the closing moments of life the hope that these few words had induced some young men to choose Christ and all his mighty love, would be most precious and grateful to my heart. This I know, that if old age is welcomed when it brings to Christ only the relics of a wasted life; for you, when you offer him the force of your will, the glow of your affections, the opening powers of your intellect, for you there will be more than welcome; there will be "lavish acknowledgment." He will deign to call it "the kindness of your youth," which he will "remember" for ever.





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 029 789 045 1